

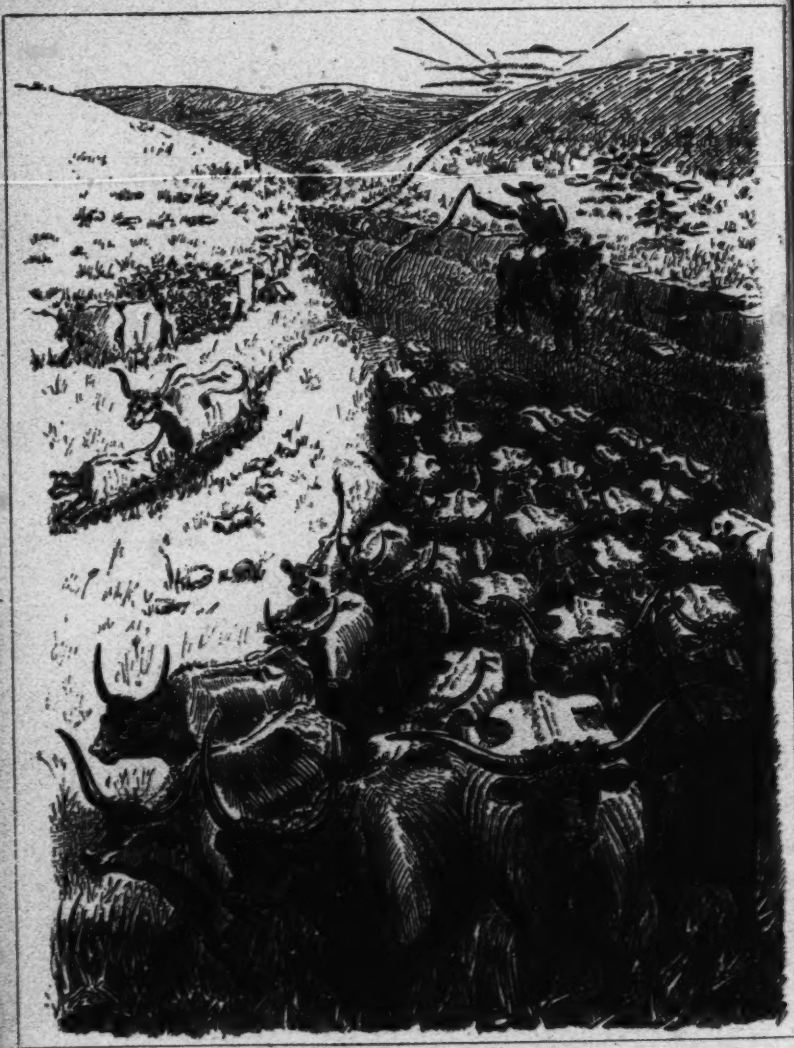
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Frontispiece.]

THE RETURNING HERD.

EMIGRANT LIFE IN KANSAS.

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BY

PERCY G. EBBUTT.



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PREFACE.

IN dedicating this work to the public, the author trusts that its contents will be found of sufficient interest to retain the attention of the ordinary reader.

Being a *bonâ-fide* narrative of personal experiences, it may perhaps suffer from a lack of "hair-breadth escapes and thrilling episodes," such as in reading a description of life on the "boundless prairie" one is usually apt to conjure up. But if, at the expense of these, a strict attention to fact may in these days contain sufficient attraction, the author has the modest hope that the seeker after information may, respecting a comparatively unknown part of that truly great and wonderful country,

—the United States,—find a few points worthy of his remembrance; while he who reads for entertainment only may possibly find enough of interest, and perhaps amusement, to warrant the book's perusal. And if beyond this these pages may assist in the least degree the intending emigrant, the author will be more than satisfied.

A regard for the truth has also prompted the insertion (in Chapter X.) of a proceeding not altogether to the author's credit; but after mature reflection—while not attempting to justify the action—he has determined to let it stand, and trusts that the reader will, like the author's father, pardon the foolish step.

The book has few pretensions of either a literary or scientific nature, but as a plain unvarnished record of life in the far west—and as such only—it claims the indulgence of the public.

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

	PAGE
London to New York.—Five days' travelling by rail.—	
Arrival at Junction City.—Our first Indians.—Wild	
Bill.—An offer of adoption.—Parkersville.—Texas	
cattle.—Captain Brown	1

CHAPTER II.

THE MOVE ON TO THE PRAIRIE.

Our shanty.—Baking bread.—A wild cat.—A revolver	
accident.—Our shanty is built on the wrong land.—	
Moving.—The house built.—The furniture.—Break-	
ing prairie.—Parker's cellar.—Planting beans.—	
Skunks.—A dark night.—Animals, insects, and	
reptiles.—Duck keeping.—Jack's geese.—My pig	17

CHAPTER III.

WE GET SOME NEIGHBOURS.

"Prairie" Wilson.—George Dyson.—A young grand-	
mother.—"Dutch Jake."—The Quinns.—Gathering	
wild grapes and "tearing around."—Sleeping sixteen	

in one room.—Bill Harper and his ring.—John Turney's "'ot potatoes."—A prairie fire.—The pet antelope.—The Garretts.—An evening party . . .	PAGE 44
---	------------

CHAPTER IV.

SNAKE STORIES, ETC.

Our first acquaintance.—A novel weapon.—A false alarm.—A narrow escape.—A curious sight.—Instinct of pigs.—Our decision, and how we kept it.—Snake hunts.—Another kind of wild cat.—Varieties of snakes.—An easy victim.—Frogs and snakes.—Game.—Figure 4 traps.—Edible and other prairie plants .	59
--	----

CHAPTER V.

FARMING AND HERDING.

Our crops.—Pig killing.—First Christmas on the prairie.—Losing cattle.—Visited by Indians.—Cold weather.—Moving our house.—Building stone.—Our mule and pony.—Soap-making.—Indian corn.—Our family party gets smaller.—The blue bird.—The Prices.—Our herd.—Sleeping out of doors.—Cooking frogs.—Bad water.—Breaking up.—The prairie fire . . .	74
--	----

CHAPTER VI.

I LEAVE HOME.

Economising.—Zedekiah Blake.—Wood-chopping.—Rabbit-hunting.—The trapper.—A touch of earthquake.—A creek accident.—Ague.—A touch of scurvy.—Scarcity of mutton.—A whisky accident.—Maloy.—Council Grove.—How to make dogs hardy.—A camp-meeting	107
--	-----

CONTENTS.

vii

CHAPTER VII.

PAGE

GRASSHOPPERS, ETC.

Arrival of the pest.—Attempted precautions.—Their fearlessness.—How the corn vanished.—The orchard stripped.—Down the well.—Their departure.—Their multitude.—The lost cow.—Indians.—The Indian's grave 126

CHAPTER VIII.

BACK TO THE PRAIRIE.

A split in the camp.—Early rising.—The county treasurer.—Living in a dug-out.—The Grasshopper Relief Fund.—The old home again.—The sick cow.—The disappearance of the Quinns.—A rifle accident.—Building a schoolhouse.—Road-making.—How the land is divided 139

CHAPTER IX.

MORE HERDING.

Another engagement.—The Cromptons.—Helping on the farm.—A fog.—Strayed horses.—Lost heifer.—Clearing Wilkinson's melon patch.—Snakes.—The wild bees' nest.—Mud-daubers.—The quarrel.—Bad weather.—My pony wears out 154

CHAPTER X.

LEAVING HOME AGAIN.

Premature arrangements.—An unexpected check.—Start for Junction.—A silent ride.—My note.—Down the

track.—Commence work for Anderson.—Shucking and hauling corn.—A horse trading trial.—Tom Crofter.—Anderson moves.—A bad road.—The mail carrier.—The new farm.—Rats.—Leave Anderson	PAGE 174
--	-------------

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER CHANGE.

The Whiteman family.—John Hardy.—Beer gardens.—Harvesting.—Fourth of July.—Heavy storm.—Swimming in the cornfields.—Horses on the railroad.—A funeral.—The Eureka Valley.—The lake.—Thrashing.—A panther.—Another chance of adoption.—My watch	202
--	-----

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Good-bye to Kansas.—On the ice at Quincy.—Philadelphia.—The man's thumb.—The sharper.—On board the <i>Pennsylvania</i> .—Stuck in the ice.—Christmas and New Year on the sea.—Home again.—Ashtabula Bridge.—A few words of advice	220
---	-----

EMIGRANT LIFE IN KANSAS.

CHAPTER I.

THE START.

London to New York.—Five days' travelling by rail.—Arrival at Junction City.—Our first Indians.—Wild Bill.—An offer of adoption.—Parkersville.—Texas cattle.—Captain Brown.

ON Lord Mayor's Day, the 9th of November, 1870, there started from my native town of Blanxton, in the south of England, a party of six persons, bound as emigrants for the far west of America. It consisted of my father, brother, three young men, and myself. My father had been an upholsterer, doing a very good business, but having always had a great wish to go abroad, thought it, I suppose, a good opportunity, when his place was burned down in June of the same year; Harry Parker

had been a shorthand clerk on the London and North Western Railway, but for some time past had been in my father's office; Walter Woods was a printer by trade, but had also studied engineering a little; Will Humphrey was the son of a Sussex farmer, and consequently the most useful man of the bunch, as we were going farming and cattle-raising; while my brother Jack and I were schoolboys of the tender ages of twelve and ten years respectively.

With the exception of Humphrey, none of us knew anything whatever of farming; I might say that we scarcely knew a plough from a harrow (I remember one of our party speaking very enthusiastically of *churning* cheese), and we had certainly never done a day's work on a farm. To be sure Jack had been sent to a farm a few miles from Blanxton for a couple of months before we left, to learn what he could; but I did not observe, when we arrived on our land in America, that he had much more knowledge than the rest of us. We took with us about enough luggage to stock a colony, all packed in ten great cases, four feet long by two feet six square, painted of a bright vermilion colour,

and with our names and destination on. The latter was "Junction City, Kansas."

The contents of these cases were of a very varied nature, and comprised tools, clothing, arms, and ammunition, besides tea, cocoa, etc.; etc. Many of the things were quite useless we afterwards found, and a great number we could have bought in America quite as cheaply as in England. Among the totally useless articles was a hand corn-mill with a great fly-wheel of five feet diameter, which, of course, required a larger box. The guns, however, were packed in with this, and we had quite a good armoury. There were four double-barrelled shot guns and two rifles, as well as seven six-chambered revolvers, and in addition to this formidable array we each sported a tremendous jack-knife, too large for the pocket, and so worn with a cord sailor-wise. Having seen this crowd of things all safely packed and started for Liverpool, we took leave of all our friends, and left Blanxton at seven o'clock in the morning so that we might get across London with our smaller luggage (such as we would want on the voyage) before the streets got crowded.

We reached Liverpool in good time, and saw

the majority of our luggage on board, though there were two cases delayed somewhere, which had to follow on in another steamer. After looking around Liverpool a little we retired for the night to the Union Hotel, and breakfasting early the next morning, went aboard the good ship *City of Brooklyn*, of the Inman Line. Walter and I went on board first with the small luggage, and got it stowed away in our bunks (for we were going to travel steerage as genuine emigrants), and then came up on deck. Well, we waited and waited for the remainder of our party, until we thought we should have to go by ourselves; but just as the ship was off they arrived by the last trip of the tender. We started down the Mersey at eleven o'clock, and arrived the next morning in Queenstown Harbour, where the ship was soon surrounded with bum-boat women, desirous of parting with great quantities of fruit, legs of mutton, fresh butter, eggs, etc. We, having taken in a good supply of apples and the ship a good supply of Irish emigrants besides the mail bags, steam was got up, and we were soon out on the broad Atlantic. A journey across the "Herring-Pond," as our American cousins call this

ocean, has been so often described that it is needless for me to say much about it. We had some rough weather, of course. One night it was so bad that the Irish women were rushing about calling upon the Virgin Mary and all the saints, and making a most tremendous noise. This had no effect apparently, except that it brought the wrath of the steward upon their heads, who told them to "dry up, or he'd lock the hatches on 'em." However, I slept through it all until daybreak, when it still remained very rough, the great waves rushing right over the bulwarks, and drenching every one who attempted to pass along the middle decks. Of course, being in the steerage, we suffered considerable inconvenience at meals, etc., in this rough weather, as we were not provided with such luxuries as swinging tables, that would preserve their equilibrium, such as were in the saloon. It required a little practice before we could get our soup or coffee to take the right direction when everything was at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Our meals were as follows: breakfast, hot rolls, butter, and coffee; dinner, soup, salt-junk, occasionally fresh meat, and potatoes,

varied on Fridays with salt fish (on account of the Catholics), and on Sundays with the addition of plum-duff; for tea, tea or coffee, and ship-biscuits. We all suffered more or less with sea-sickness, but were soon all right, with the exception of Humphr y, who was ill the whole of the time. Our compartment held ten berths around its sides, arranged in two tiers. We all had our places together, although to do that Walter and I had to sleep in one bunk, which was rare fun; for the bunk was so narrow, that when once we were in, there was no turning over or round without a mutual agreement and movement. The other five bunks were occupied by Italians, and one old man, whom we called "the dirty Dutchman," and he was a dirty old man in all truth. He never went on deck once during the whole journey, but laid there in his bunk all day and night, sick or well. We saw very little of interest during the voyage save one or two ships, and a few whales a good distance off. We had a race for two or three days with the steamship *Wisconsin*, and beat her, arriving in New York Harbour a few hours in advance, having accomplished the journey in twelve days.

In passing off the vessel we had to go before the doctor, who had to certify that all arrived in healthy condition; but I guess it was a bit of a farce, for Humphrey was very ill, and upon proper examination after landing, was found to be suffering from typhoid fever. I know the doctor was looking up at the sky when I passed him. I am only surprised that we were not all ill, being cooped up with all those wretched people (there were nine hundred emigrants on board; poor Irish, Dutch, and Italians mostly). But we kept on deck as much as we possibly could. We were landed at Castle Garden, which is a fine Government building where poor emigrants are befriended and lodged previous to being sent west. There is a money exchange bureau at which strangers may exchange their coin for American paper without risk of being cheated, and various other useful accommodation. We only stayed long enough to get our luggage, and then put up at the "Washington Hotel" after sending Humphrey to the hospital.

We spent a fortnight in New York city seeing the sights. We admired the Central Park very much, also some of their fine straight

broad streets and avenues, public buildings, etc. We crossed the river also to see New Jersey city, and Brooklyn, both fine places, and were very much pleased with Greenwood Cemetery, which is far prettier than anything of the kind in England. It is laid out like a park with trees and ornamental waters, and has some fine monuments. It looks nice enough to make one almost wish to take a plot there.

My father went to see some land that was for sale at a place called Brickwood across the river, and some few miles from the city, and almost came to terms. If he had bought it, he would have gone in for market-gardening, but he preferred to go farther west. There was a funny old man staying at our hotel, who had a queer way of spending his time. He had heard something about a certain Captain Kidd, a pirate, burying some treasure on an island in the river many years ago, and he used to devote all his energies to trying to find it. He would come to New York and earn some money somehow, and then go back to the island and dig till all his money was gone again. He started off on one of his

expeditions while we were there, with spade and pick. Poor old fellow! I wonder if he ever found the treasure.

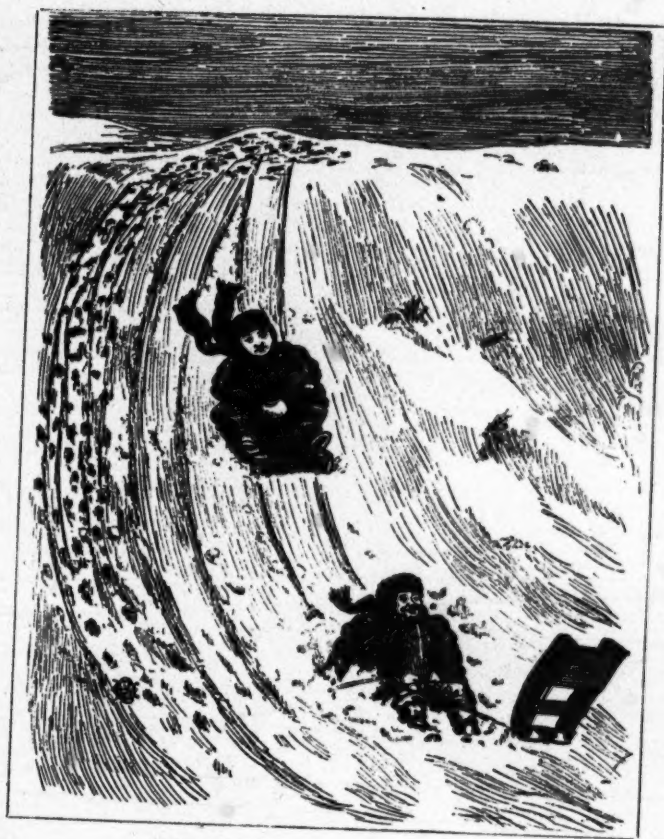
At the end of a fortnight, finding that Humphrey would not be able to leave the hospital for some time, we started up the country. After two days and nights in the cars we arrived at Chicago, and being Sunday, we had to lay over all day, as the trains do not run on Sundays, except local, short-distance trains. We spent the day looking over the city and wandering about the shores of Lake Michigan, which seemed quite like the ocean, with its great waves and spray dashing on the shore.

Early on Monday morning we again took to the cars, and after three more days and nights arrived at Junction City, Davis County, Kansas, which is nearly fifteen hundred miles from New York City. This may seem rather slow travelling, one thousand five hundred miles in five days, but what with changing and other delays, we lost a good deal of time. The journeys now are made a good deal faster. We were very comfortable in the cars, for we did not go on by the emigrant trains, but in the

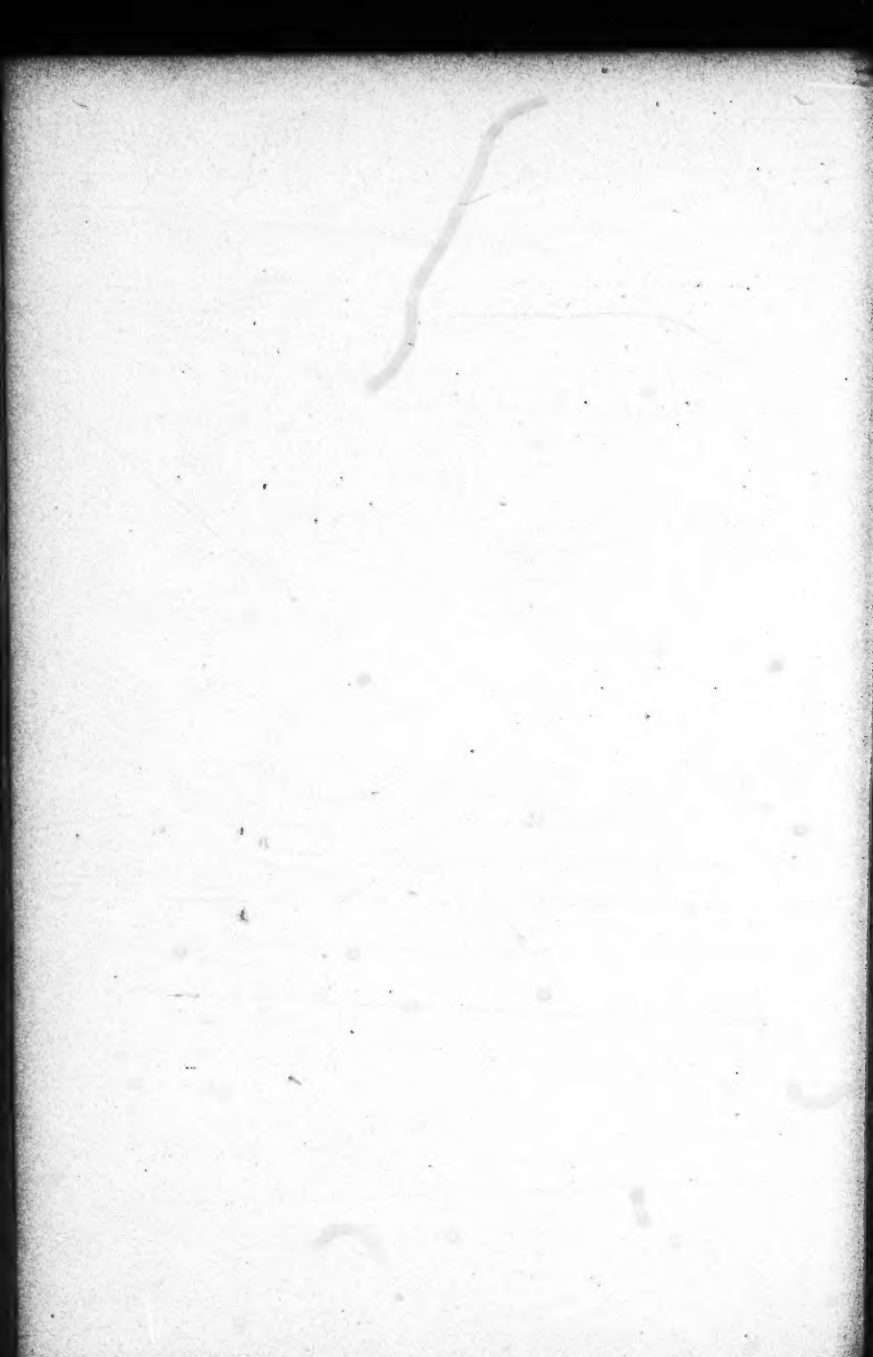
regular Pullmans, in which we slept and ate our meals without the train stopping.

Upon our arrival at Junction we put up at the Empire Hotel, and had a jolly time; for while the elder members of the party were looking about for land and shooting all the game they could, we two boys amused ourselves with sleigh-riding down the Bluffs, as the hills on the other side of the Smoky River were called, and with making divers excursions into the surrounding country. Sometimes we went to see the stone quarries a little way out of town, where very fine building material is obtained. Then again we used to watch the men sawing and pulling ice out of the river ready for packing away for summer. One day we went down to the slaughter-house, and we got a couple of cow's horns, which we made to blow, by sawing the ends off and cutting a small hole, and then we made the hills re-echo with the music (?).

At that time Junction was quite a small place, with a very few hundred inhabitants, but was growing rapidly. It is situated on rather high land at the junction of the Smoky and Republican Rivers, whence its name. It is also now



SLEIGH-RIDING DOWN THE BLUFFS. {To face page 10.



the junction of two railways, the Kansas Pacific, and the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas. Three miles distant, on a bluff overhanging the Kansas River (as it is called after the union of the two rivers just named), stands Fort Riley, a garrison for light cavalry and artillery, as a guard against Indians. These are getting rather scarce, however, by this time, as the country is too thickly settled by the whites. One day, when Jack and I were out on one of our expeditions, we met three Indians, and, as they were the first that we had seen, we were rather scared. We were a long way off, and so we hid in some bushes. Little stupid! We might have saved ourselves the trouble, for they probably saw us long before we saw them. But they passed by without molesting us. While we were staying at Junction we had some very cold weather, and one night three soldiers going home drunk to Fort Riley were frozen to death. One day we boys went out with the others when they were shooting, and feeling rather thirsty, I think that we astonished a farmer up on the prairie by going to ask for some beer. He must have taken us for lunatics, for no one keeps beer or anything of the kind in the house

as they do in England; and when we asked if he had no cider he just shut the door. He did not seem to know what was meant. Certainly there were no apple trees about, so that perhaps they were strange questions to ask.



"WILD BILL."

Game was very plentiful, and we used to bring home lots for the landlady at the Empire Hotel, to make "sparing-pie" as she called it.

One day we saw "Wild Bill," a noted desperado or "border ruffian," shooting quails in a stable yard in the city (they were so

plentiful and tame). Wild Bill was a fine-looking fellow, with long curly hair hanging down his back, and was dressed in rather a dandified fashion. He was said to have twenty-seven nicks cut on the handle of his revolver, each signifying a man whose life had been taken by him. And yet he walked the streets as free as any man, and perhaps with more security than a less desperate criminal would, for he would have to be a plucky man to arrest "Wild Bill." He was afterwards actually elected "sheriff" of Wichita, a town down south, which was frequented by the Texas "cow-boys," and he was killed at last in some saloon brawl.

"Sheriff" there is another word for head policeman, and has not much connection with a city official such as we have in England. While staying at the Empire Hotel there was a young man lodging there who was suffering from a crushed arm. He was employed on the railway, and was hurt while shunting some trucks. The doctor used to come every day, and we boys took considerable interest in the dressing and painting with iodine, etc. The doctor was a very nice man, and having no

children wanted to adopt me, but I did not particularly want to go with him, and my father did not particularly care about letting me, so we did not come to terms. The doctor was quite in earnest about it, and offered my father one hundred and sixty acres of the best land on the river if he would let me come to him. I was to be brought up as a doctor, and should be free to go or stay with him on arriving at the age of twenty-one years. Of course, boy-like, I was looking forward to our life on the prairie as being all play or adventure, and hardly liked to give up the idea of it for good hard studying, such as I should have had to go in for. I have often since thought over it, and wondered how my life would have gone if I had accepted his offer.

After we had stayed in Junction for six weeks we removed to Parkersville, a town some twenty-five miles distant, near where our party had taken land. Here we lived for a fortnight at a boarding-house, spending our time pretty much as before. The town, which at that time consisted of about nineteen houses, a drug store, a post-office, and a general store, is situated in Morris County, on the river Neosho,

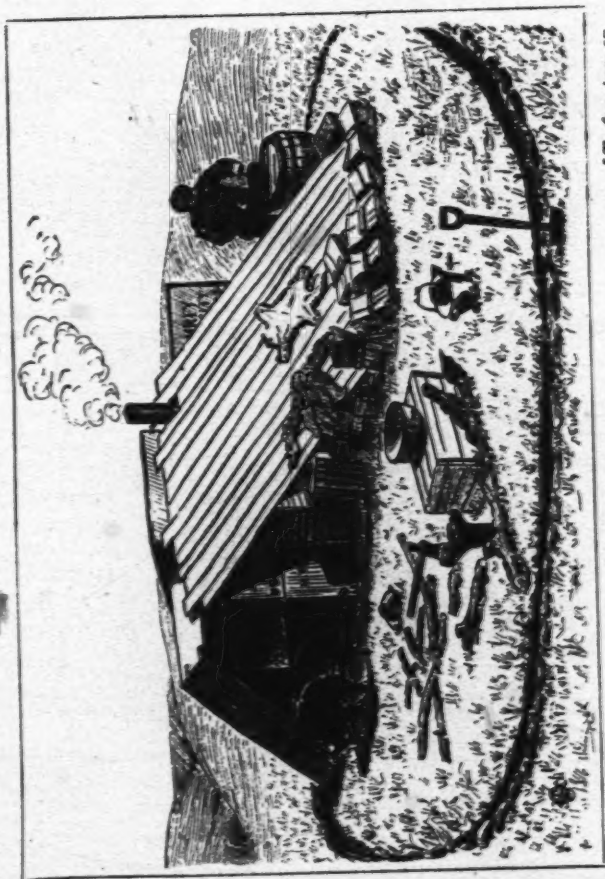
sometimes called "No-show," as in summer it goes dry occasionally. The drug store was the rendezvous for all the farmers coming to town, for apart from its being also the post-office, it was the only place where "medicine" could be obtained. There was no regular saloon or drinking bar in the place, but every one that wanted a drink went to the drug store, and got a little whisky "medicinally." His Worship, the Mayor, ran the place, and I guess he did a good business. Another much frequented place was the general store, run by Captain Brown; we had about the usual number of captains in that town,—about three out of every five persons. Here the loafers congregated in good force, sitting round the roaring, red-hot stove, with their heels high up, and chewing tobacco, talking politics, whittling sticks, and eating crackers and cheese. Captain Brown was a man of considerable importance,—anyhow in his own eyes,—but I guess my father kinder took the starch out of him once. Captain Brown offered him two fingers to shake, and my father immediately hooked into them with one—the little one. The next time they met it was a whole-handed job.

One man staying at the boarding-house was a cattle dealer, and had a number of wild Texas animals wintering near at hand. We went to see them at the corral, and found several so weak that they could not stand. We assisted some to their feet only to get ourselves run after by the ungrateful brutes until they tumbled down again. Cattle frequently get like that during the cold winter, especially those from the south for the first time. My father bought one or two cows in the neighbourhood ready for when we should go up on the prairie, but not having had any experience in such matters, I am afraid that he was rather taken in. He also bought a couple of town lots as a speculation in case the town took to growing. Some money belonging to Jack and me he invested for us in a piece of timber land on the river, so that when up on the prairie, we might have some wood to burn or for fences, and not be entirely dependent upon "jay-hawking," which is the term for stealing wood off Government land.



HELPING A WEAK ONE.

[To face page 16.]



OUR SHANTY.

[To face page 17.]

CHAPTER II.

THE MOVE ON TO THE PRAIRIE.

Our shanty.—Baking bread.—A wild cat.—A revolver accident.—Our shanty is built on the wrong land.—Moving.—The house built.—The furniture.—Breaking prairie.—Parker's cellar.—Planting beans.—Skunks.—A dark night.—Animals, insects, and reptiles.—Duck keeping.—Jack's geese.—My pig.

On the 18th of February, 1871, having hired a couple of waggons, we moved up on the prairie with all our luggage, and boards to build our house with. On arriving at our destination, seven miles from town, the large boxes were piled up, and the boards laid slanting from the top to the ground for a roof, and thus we made a very comfortable shanty. It was certainly none too large, though, for six of us (Humphrey having rejoined us at Junction), and it was so low that no one could stand upright in it at the highest part. However, with the exception of the cook, we did

not spend much time indoors—there was no door, though. We had an iron stove for cooking in one corner, with the flue running through the top, which once set fire to the *building*; but as we had plenty of water handy we were able to extinguish it before it did much damage. We were very well off for provisions, having a good supply of bacon, biscuits, eggs, cheese, coffee, sugar, flour, rice, etc.

The cook, Harry Parker, made his first attempt at bread-baking before we had been here many days, but was not over successful. The bread was baked in a great iron pan, and was as hard as a well-done brick, and about as digestible. The outside could not be cut with a knife, we were obliged to use a hatchet to make any impression. However, a few more trials soon improved the baking. For fuel we had to go about a mile down a little creek "jay-hawking." There were some small trees growing which we chopped down and dragged up to the shanty on wheelbarrows, not having any horses as yet. On one of these excursions Walter Woods shot a wild cat, and was fortunate in getting away without injury, as it

attacks man when provoked. An old settler, who saw the brute afterwards, said that he would not like to tackle one with a gun only; he would want a good knife or an axe to finish him with. But Walter saw some animal's eyes glaring at him from some bushes, and blazed away, shooting the creature dead. It was then brought home in triumph on the barrow, and after being duly admired was skinned and buried. It was a good-sized animal, about twice the size of a large domestic cat, or larger. Its fur was very nice and thick, and made a couple of good caps.

While living in this mansion we had our first sight of a prairie fire, but as it was on high ground, where the grass was not rank, and there was very little wind, it was not particularly fierce.

While living here we almost had an accident. We had amongst our collection an old pepper-box revolver, a stupid thing, with six barrels the full length of the machine, and not six chambers and one long barrel as usual. Well, this old thing was loaded, and some of the party, who had been practising shooting at a shingle target, were standing about trying

to make the pepper-box go off, but it would not. They snapped and snapped, but without effect, until presently I took it up and pulled the trigger; it hung fire for an instant, and then gave such a kick as to almost knock me over, and the bullets went flying just over the heads of my friends. All six chambers went off at once for some inscrutable reason, but fortunately no one was hurt.

The country around had all been surveyed by Government previous to our settling, and divided into square miles,—sections, they are called,—marked with a stone set in the ground. They may then be cut up easily into the required lots—viz., eighty acres for an ordinary settler, and one hundred and sixty for any man who has been a soldier in the Federal Army. When we began to look around us, we found that our goods were all dropped upon land belonging to Parker instead of to my father, and as the house was to be built upon land belonging to the latter, all the boards, etc., had to be moved about half a mile upon the wheelbarrows. As we had a stream to cross on the way it was no easy task, but with one to push the barrow

and another in front with a rope, we managed very well, getting stuck in the mud a few times, though, when it took all the available hands to pull the vehicle out.

We had been, up to this time, favoured with remarkably mild weather; in fact, it was so warm, that on the 19th of February, the day following our arrival on the prairie, we went and bathed in a stream a little way from the shanty. In after years I never saw it warm enough to do that with any comfort before May, and I verily believe that had we had such weather as we experienced in following winters, that we should have all been frozen to death in our shanty. Of course we had a few cold snaps. For instance, after the house was completed, with the exception of the *roof*, and we had moved in, we awoke one morning with eighteen inches of snow on the top of our blankets, but there was no very hard frost with it.

It may seem rather a funny thing to do, to go into a house before the roof is on; but you see, as we built the house we robbed the boards which formed the top of the box shanty, so that we were bound to sleep without a roof in any case.

We did all the work ourselves, having a carpenter's bench and plenty of tools, and made quite a comfortable little house. Certainly it was not very large, having only one room, fourteen feet by twelve, with an attic above, but it was large enough, especially in cold weather, and in hot weather we lived out of doors mostly. The attic was reached by a series of holes cut in the wall for hands and feet, which led to a trap-door in the ceiling, so that no room was lost by having a flight of stairs.

For a table we used the carpenter's bench, and for beds we had the large boxes ranged round the room, which also, when the blankets were rolled up, served us as seats.

Almost in the centre of the room stood the cooking stove with an iron pipe through the end of the house, so that with a row of drawers and shelves for the crockery, our room was pretty full of furniture.

After the house was completed we had to set to work to improve the land in all ways, and horses and oxen were bought to plough with.

Our first purchase was a yoke of oxen

They were not long from Texas, and not more than half broken in, and were a funny couple. To begin with, they did not at all match in colour, nor were they much alike in other respects. We called them "Broad" and "Pretty"—queer names for oxen you will say. Broad was about as fat as a slate, and Pretty—well, he was not named according to his looks anyhow, nor was his temper of the best description. He was a most vicious and obstinate old brute. Broad was a decent old chap, but awfully lazy, and would let us ride on his back, being too lazy to trouble about the matter; he could easily have fetched us off with his tremendous horns.

These animals were often a fearful bother to yoke up, as you might get one in, and dodge around with the other for half an hour before getting him under the yoke. When properly broken the oxen should walk up when called. I guess we did not improve them, for we did not know much about bullocks. I know, once Walter was driving them, and when he wanted them to stop he shouted out "Whoa!" and at the same time hit them with a big stick. Whether they were

supposed to go on or to stop, would, I am sure, have puzzled wiser creatures than the oxen.

They were mostly used for ploughing, and mighty hard work it is, too, the first ploughing, or "breaking," as it is called; as of course the land that has been growing grass for centuries is one mass of roots, and the plough goes pop! pop! pop! cutting through them, sometimes coming to a dead stop at some extra thick bunch of roots. Every now and then the share has to be sharpened with a big file. It is very hard work for the animals, too, if they have much to do. For a small plough with a twelve-inch share, two oxen or three horses are generally used; but a good deal of breaking is done with a large plough of about twenty or twenty-four inch share, and from three to six yoke of oxen. Of course everybody does not own these things, and considerable business is done in breaking prairie by the acre.

After we had broken a considerable piece of land the various crops were put in. These consisted principally of Indian corn, spring wheat, oats, barley, potatoes, sorghum, or sugar-

cane, and a good number of different seeds in a patch of ground appropriated to garden uses. After this was all done fences had to be built to protect the crops from stray cattle and horses. Vast herds, belonging to people living miles away perhaps, wandered about at their own sweet will, and as we had very good spring water on our land it was rather a favourite pasture ground. Since that time, however, a herd law has been passed, so that no cattle are allowed to go about without a herder to keep them out of mischief during six months—viz., May to November. Fences are, therefore, no longer necessary, but still almost every one is trying to grow an osage-orange hedge. This is a prickly shrub that grows very rapidly, and bears a good deal of resemblance to an orange tree, including the fruit, though that is not edible.

We bought several head of cattle soon after settling, and as they were mostly cows with young calves, there was no difficulty in keeping them at home; all we had to do was to fasten the calves up.

The oxen and horses when not at work were picketed out on the prairie by a long rope and

a stake driven in the ground, until they were accustomed to the place.

The land where we had settled was very undulating, being on the head of a creek; and to an inexperienced eye all the little valleys or ravines, as they are called, were strangely alike, being only distinguishable one from another by a few bushes, or some large stones, or perhaps a little stream. For some time, then, it was hardly advisable to go far from the house without a compass. I know on one occasion my father and I started to walk to Junction City, which lay to the north-west of us some seventeen miles, but the country being divided into sections, we thought it better to go straight west at first until we should strike a creek about six miles away, and then turn to the north, and follow it until it fell into the Smoky River. Well, we started all right, and proceeded for a few miles as we thought in a westerly direction, but as the sun was overclouded, we presently looked at the compass, and found, to our astonishment, that we were travelling as fast as we could just south-east. We altered our course at once, and after some time struck Clarke's creek,

from whence it was an easy matter to find our way to Junction.

As my father had some business at the bank, he hurried forward and left me to follow. When nearing the town, while passing along the railroad track, I captured a wild duck. It was sitting still, and I threw a big stone at it and broke its wing. As I did not then know how to wring its neck, I carried it along to the Empire Hotel, where we were to put up, and there asked the proprietor to do it for me. This he did with a vengeance, for he took the unfortunate bird by the head, and swung it round and round till the neck broke, and the body flew across the room, scattering blood and feathers in all directions. The proprietor did not seem very well pleased with the mess he had made, and kicked the dead duck out in the snow; but I could not see that it mattered much, as the floor was always pretty wet with tobacco juice.

We returned home by another route, buying some cows on the way.

Soon after the house was finished Parker set to work to dig a cellar in the side of a hill near by. I don't know exactly what he in-

tended to make of it, but he commenced very enthusiastically, and soon made a bit of a show. Presently, though, he struck rock, and his progress was not so fast, and it really took him several weeks off and on before he got it to look much like a cellar. By this time the sun was scorching hot, and as he was working with nothing on his back but a thin shirt, and once not even that, his back became so burned that it was a mass of blisters, and for a fortnight he could do nothing. He never finished his undertaking, and ever since, although it has half fallen in, the big hole has been known as "Parker's Cellar."

I am afraid that we boys at first looked upon life on the prairie as being all fun and adventure, and could hardly see it in its right light; hence when we got some real work to do we were apt to shirk it, as being hardly what we had expected. Quite early in the spring, after we had got some land broken, we were sent to plant about a bushel of haricot beans in one part of the field. We were not to plant a piece of land of any particular size, but to keep on planting until all the beans were used up. We started all right, putting in two or

three beans every foot or so all along the furrow, but soon got tired of it, and so finding that we were using up the beans but slowly we began planting them a handful at a time. In this way we soon finished our task, but when the beans began to grow and came up a dozen times too thick, that let the cat out of the bag, and didn't we catch it hot then! We hadn't calculated on that.

Upon first settling we were greatly troubled with skunks, which used to kill our fowls and steal our eggs. Our first acquaintance was made in this way. One day there was a great commotion among the chickens, and upon my looking under a small corn-crib to see what was the cause, a skunk snapped at my nose. Fortunately for me, though, he did not reach it, so I made for the house, and called Humphrey, who came and shot him with his revolver. Jack and I then dragged it out and skinned it, but the stench was so awful, that after having salted the pelt and nailed it to the side of the house, we could stand it no longer, and had to take it down and bury it. Those who have never seen, or rather smelled, a skunk can form no idea of the power of the perfume.

The smell is quite unique, but has a flavour of onions about it, but its pungency nothing can describe.

I have myself seen dogs after attacking one go away coughing and gasping for breath; in fact, it has to be a mighty good dog to tackle one.

One day we found a shunk in the milk-house, but were fortunately able to shoot him quite dead before he had time to guard himself with his noxious defence, otherwise I don't know what we should have done with the house.

As we had several cows, and consequently plenty of milk and butter, we had made a very nice cool house by digging out a spring and lining it with flat stones. The clear cold water ran over the floor, and a few stones we left a little higher to step on. A roof was made, and the whole covered with earth, thus making a beautifully cool place, which we should have been sorry to have had spoiled.

Walter Woods once rode over a skunk in the dark on horseback, and for months the smell of the saddle was almost unbearable. The only way to get rid of the smell from clothing, etc., is to bury it; water is no good at all.

There is a little story of the skunk as follows:—Sambo (a slave) had been whipped for stealing his master's onions. One day he appeared with a skunk in his arms, "Massa," said he, "here's de chap what steal de onions! Whew! Smell him bref!"

After we had been settled a while we purchased a waggon and a team of horses, and so occasionally went to town, and also hauled wood from our land.

On one of our journeys we had a fine spill. We were returning with a big load of wood piled up on the waggon frame, and were proceeding along very quietly, when the whole thing collapsed. Humphrey and I were sitting up on the top of the load, and were suddenly deposited on the grass, much to our surprise. For a while we could not make out the cause, until we found that the linch-pin which connects the two parts of a waggon together had jumped out. Thus the horses went on with the two front wheels, and left the two hind wheels standing still, and of course down went the whole load. Fortunately we were neither of us hurt, and after a little delay we rigged the waggon up again and proceeded on our journey.

One stormy, wet night during the early spring my father and Humphrey were very late returning from town in the waggon, and got lost. It was so dreadfully dark that Walter, who had gone out to look for a cow, had got lost too, and as Harry Parker was away somewhere, we two boys were left alone in the house. Well, we got our supper ready, and waited about for some few hours after dark,—and it was *pitch* dark, too;—and then, feeling rather anxious, we lighted a lantern, and took it to the top of the hill behind the house.

We then shouted as loud as we could, and waved our lamp in the hope that it might guide some of our friends home should they be in sight, but we heard no reply. Unfortunately, almost as we got to the top of the hill, our lamp blew out, though we heard afterwards that those in the waggon had just seen a glimmer of it. We were then in a little danger of losing *ourselves*, it was so terribly dark; but knowing the lay of the land very well, and being on our bare feet, we managed to keep our track all right. As we could do nothing else, we turned into bed after shouting a bit more, and in another couple of hours all our friends turned up.

It appeared that my father came to the conclusion that they were not going right, and declared to Humphrey, who was driving, that they were going round and round. This Humphrey indignantly denied, so to prove it, my father got out and stood still in the dark, while Humphrey described a complete circle, and declared that he had been going straight all the time.

After this conclusive evidence they unhitched the horses from the waggon, and getting on their backs allowed them to go as they chose, and were brought straight home.

On the way they stumbled over Walter, who had laid down on the wet grass under an umbrella to pass the night, within a few hundred yards of the house.

In the morning they went to look for the waggon, and found it all safe, and could see by the tracks that they had described several circles. I believe that this will happen to any one walking in absolute darkness or with eyes shut.

We used to come across some queer things sometimes when we boys were wandering about. One day Jack and I found a great

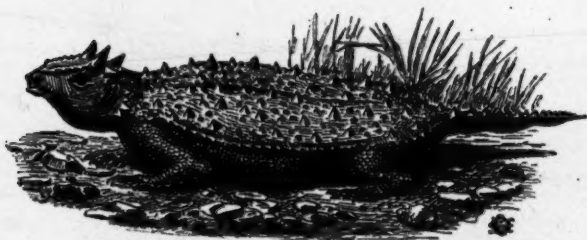
turtle, about two feet across, in a pond, but we did not know what to do with him, till presently a neighbour,—for we had some after a while,—who had to come down to haul water from our spring, came along, and he soon fetched him out and took him home to make soup.

Once when we were at work hoeing the Indian corn, our dog began making a great noise, and upon our going to see what was the matter, we found him very busy with a big badger, although not daring to attack it, as it was a large animal, and displayed a good set of teeth. After holding a council of war we set to ourselves, and the dog and I engaged his attention in front with divers false attacks, I brandishing a hoe very defiantly.

This gave Jack an opportunity to make a *détour*, and attack in the rear. On the way he procured a big fence rail, and getting in position, he brought it down with all his strength on the brute, and as he—perhaps more forcibly than elegantly—expressed it, “knocked the stuffing out of him.”

Tortoises were very common. I had one for a pet, and made him quite tame, so that I

could open his mouth and put my finger inside without him biting. I used to amuse myself by getting him to draw a little sledge that I made. I bored two small holes in the shell at the back and put in some wire loops, and hitched him to the sledge with string. He used then to pull a little load of wood or anything else I put upon it. In the autumn



HORNED TOAD.

he ran away to go torpid for the winter, as their manner is, but I found him again next spring, and of course recognised him by his wires.

I also had another queer "critter" for a pet. It was a sort of lizard, quite harmless, but decidedly ferocious in appearance. It was commonly called a "horned toad," though

why I do not know; for although it had plenty of horns, it hadn't much to do about it.

We had also a good many queer things in the way of insects. There was one called the "Devil's darning needle," a long narrow thing about like a twig of wood; another, who always seemed to be in an attitude of prayer, with his front legs held up like arms supplicating; then



GRASSHOPPER.

there was a thing just like a leaf, so that one could scarcely believe there was life in it; and then there were great over-grown grasshoppers, which seemed almost too fat to hop, with queer sorts of swords behind them.

In the evening we could hear some great insects drumming away very noisily, something like the rattlesnake's rattle, which we took it to be for some time; but we found that it proceeded from a creature like a tremendous

blowfly or blue-bottle, but of brilliant colours. There was also the "Katy-did," an insect that keeps on making a noise which, with a little imagination, can be made into "Katy-did, Katy-did!"

Among other insects apparently indigenous to the soil were regular bed bugs, which were to be found in the woods, and, together with sheepticks, would drop from the trees on to the unwary traveller. The bugs seemed to prefer the black walnut trees more particularly, and were often found on fence posts and rails under the bark. The Colorado beetle, about which there was such a scare in England a few years since, was always to be found with us, but seldom did much damage, though sometimes present in large quantities. There was another kind of potato bug which did much more harm—a long slate-coloured insect. These we used to try and get rid of as much as we possibly could. They were generally to be found on the top of the haulm, and so we walked along with a pail and brushed the bugs in with a stick, and afterwards scalded them.

An insect much more dreaded than either, though not on account of the potato, was the

chinch-bug, a little black thing about the size of a big flea, but which sometimes infested the Indian corn, and sucked all the juice out of it, so that it withered and died. Owing to their small size one could not do much to check them.

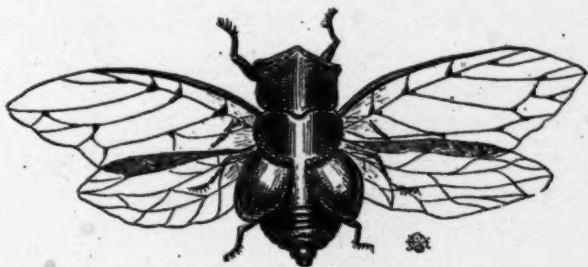
There were several kinds of large spiders, some with bodies as large as hazel-nuts, and legs two or three inches long, of a brilliant velvety black, with gold or red spots. They were exceedingly repulsive, and I should think that a bite would be dangerous. They used to stretch their nets right across paths, in the trees, or long grass, several feet wide. We amused ourselves by snapping at them with our cattle whips.

Centipedes and scorpions were occasionally found, but I never heard of any one getting hurt by them.

Sometimes, when bathing, we boys used to get stung by a peculiar kind of caterpillar that was to be found upon the bushes lining the pond. For a long time we could not make out what was the matter, when brushing by the bushes it seemed almost as if the leaves stung us; but, upon further examination, we

found that there were little hairy caterpillars on the bushes that, when touched, stung us rather sharply. The after effect was about like a mosquito bite.

Of beetles there was an infinite variety, some of them of most brilliant hues. Mosquitoes, too, abounded, and proved exceedingly troublesome, both to ourselves and the cattle.



THE CICADA, COMMONLY CALLED THE LOCUST.

The latter were worried a good deal by big black flies,—fat things an inch or more long,—which used to settle along the backs of the cattle out of reach of their tails, and deposit eggs under their skin. Here they remained till spring, when they had changed to great grubs or chrysalises, and we boys used to go among the cattle and squeeze them out with our

thumbs. This is so universal an occurrence that prices of skins are usually quoted in two ways—ordinary, and free from grubs.

Besides the noisy insects, the bull-frogs and the small frogs kept up a continual roar or croaking, so that music was not unknown on the prairie. The bull-frogs were tremendous creatures, measuring from nose to toes a foot to eighteen inches; their roar can be heard a mile or more. Fortunately they were not very numerous, but the small frogs were in every pond in myriads, but by degrees they got thinned out around us by our ducks.

In very wet weather the toads used to croak at night, and they were so plentiful in places as to be almost deafening.

Snakes I will speak of presently; but besides these we had a great variety of lizards, and even chameleons. It was very funny to see these latter change their colour. We would see one perhaps of a green or violet colour, sitting on a big rock, and would throw a stone at him, when in an instant he was almost invisible, having changed to a dull grey like the rock.

Besides all these things there were a good

many wolves about us for some time, as our first attempts at duck-keeping well proved. Ducks are rather silly birds, and will not go into a house at night like hens, but prefer to take their repose either on the water or else on the banks. Hence they fall an easy prey to the coyotes, as the small prairie wolves are called.

We bought a few ducks when we first moved up, and after losing most of them built a small sod house, and by careful attention managed to keep them for some time, driving them in every evening. But one night a stray pig broke the door down, and they were all carried away, save one old drake. We had the pleasure of seeing a wolf disappear over the hill in the morning, with the last duck on his shoulder. However, the pig kindly left us eighteen eggs, and by rare good luck we hatched them all under hens, and so got a good start again, much to the old drake's satisfaction. It was very amusing to see the fuss he made with the young ones.

Besides the coyotes, which we could hear barking almost every night, there were a few grey wolves in the neighbourhood, but both

are getting scarce now, as they are hunted a good deal.

An arrangement is made, that on a certain day all the young men for some miles around shall start from the outer edge of a large tract of country and ride towards an agreed centre, driving in any wolves they may come across. By the time all the horsemen are in sight of one another they may perhaps have six or eight wolves surrounded, which are then shot and killed.

The grey wolves are considered rather dangerous, but rarely attack a man unless in company, and goaded by hunger to desperation. The coyotes are arrant cowards.

Besides our ducks Jack had three geese, but was not very successful with them; for one was carried off by a wolf, the old gander was killed by a stray dog, and the other stupid old goose took to sitting, and there she "sot and sot" till she died—literally of starvation, despite all our efforts to make her feed. Thus ended Jack's speculation.

I was equally fortunate with my live stock. I had a little pig given me, and a very fine pig it grew; it was so long and so thin

that we called it "the greyhound." It was a very intelligent animal though, and was a good one at a fence; in fact, it was impossible to keep it in a pen at all, and really became so knowing, that if upon finding it in the garden we called the dogs, it would immediately rush away and jump back into the pen before a dog had time to get it by the ear. After a while, when it had got pretty big, or rather long and tall, my father proposed to make pork of it, though more with the idea of getting rid of the mischievous thing than anything else, and so I traded him away, with a little to boot, for a heifer calf. The latter grew till she was two years old, and then laid down and died, and thus stopped my cattle-raising.

CHAPTER III.

WE GET SOME NEIGHBOURS.

"Prairie" Wilson.—George Dyson.—A young grandmother.—
"Dutch Jake."—The Quinns.—Gathering wild grapes
and "tearing around."—Sleeping sixteen in one room.—
Bill Harper and his ring.—John Turney's "'ot potatoes."
—A prairie fire.—The pet antelope.—The Garretts.—An
evening party.

WHEN we moved up we were the only settlers on the prairie for some miles round, but a few months afterwards several emigrants took land. I will introduce you to a few of them.

About the first was one who was soon known by the name of "Prairie" Wilson, having a farm on the highest land in the district. He was very poor when he first started, having only a wife, one child, and his bedclothes, but by dint of hard work he soon had a comfortable place.

Another family was that of George Dyson, who settled about a mile from our house.

They were of rather a better class than some of the emigrants who followed.

Mrs. Dyson had been married before, at the mature age of thirteen years, and had been left a widow with two children at nineteen. The first husband was a great friend of Mr. Dyson's, and when he died he asked him to look after his wife and children, and he did so in the most practical way.

Living with the Dysons was one Will Hopkins, who used to do a good deal of prairie-breaking, having a twenty-four inch plough and six yoke of oxen. His land joined my father's, and he eventually built a house on it, and married Mrs. Dyson's daughter when she was fifteen years old. A year or so afterwards, and Mrs. Dyson was a proud grandmother, aged thirty-one. Go-ahead people the Americans, are they not?

Living near them was old Anthony Prauss, a Dutchman, who could speak about twelve words in English; but he was a decent old chap, and we got along very well with him.

Another of our neighbours was a man called "Dutch Jake." He had a farm a few miles from us, and professedly lived with his

"sister," though there was little doubt but that she was his wife. It was simply a trick to get more land, as an unmarried woman can have eighty acres of Government land free, the same as a man, but a married woman cannot. A widow may also take a piece of land, and, in fact; any one who is the head of a family, if even a boy or girl under age. There is no charge for land, except a nominal fee of about fourteen dollars.

Jake was rather a queer customer, and we thought none too particular; for the "sister" used at one time to do Harry Parker's washing, and once when he went over after it unexpectedly, he found Jake wearing his shirt and trowsers. After that he changed his laundress.

There were several Swedish families round about, who seemed good, thrifty people. One peculiar characteristic of them seemed to be that they could nearly all work well in stone, and, as a consequence, they all erected good solid-built stone houses.

They seemed to be very hardy and industrious. I knew one, Olaf Swainson, who was one day quarrying rock, and cut one of his

fingers clean off. He made very little fuss about it, but picked it up, rolled it in some grass, and put it in his pocket, and then went to the house to tie up his hand.

Then there were the Quinns, a large family of Irish-Americans, who also arrived with nothing save one or two horses and a few tools; but as there were several boys large enough to work, they soon got along swimmingly. We became acquainted in a very short time, and used to go over there very frequently. They broke some prairie and built a house with the sods, with a few boards for the roof, and then set to work in earnest with the crops, and they were soon able to live on the products of the farm and garden. As they had no cows we supplied them with milk, which they much wanted, there being several small children among them; and so they undertook to do our washing in exchange for half-a-gallon of milk a day.

Jack or I used to carry the milk over in a covered pail every morning on horseback, and we soon had quite a path worn across the prairie. There were three streams to cross on the way, and by always crossing at the same

place the banks became trodden down into a regular quagmire, several feet wide and difficult to get over.

On one occasion I got a nasty fall. I was riding a young filly, and after trying to make her walk across she suddenly jumped, but not far enough. She landed all of a heap on the opposite bank, and I and the milk went clean over her head and came down in the long grass. The filly ran away a few yards, and then came back to where I was picking myself up, and allowed me to catch her and mount again.

Fortunately I was none the worse for my shaking, but the Quinns had to do without milk on that day, as I rode up and told them what had happened.

Jack and I used to have rather a jolly time at this house. The old lady would tell us to "come over and tear around with the boys," and we used to be fond of "tearing around."

In the warm weather we went swimming in the stream a little distance from the house, and fine fun it was; too, though once I was nearly drowned. I could not swim very far then, and in going the length of the pond my strength or courage gave out, and down I went. I had

fortunately got beyond the deepest part though, and was just able to touch ground with my toes, after getting my mouth full of water two or three times. With continued practice, however, we could soon all swim a good distance.

Sometimes we took our pony Barney in the water with us, and had some rare fun, for it was deep enough to swim a horse; two or three boys would get on his back, and one or two more have hold of his tail, and sail around the pond. Sometimes we used him for a diving board, standing on the bank.

Now and then we practised swimming with all our clothes on; old hat, old boots, and everything—and jolly good practice it is, too. Of course our clothing was not particularly fine, and was not much damaged by being wetted and dried in the sun. Our usual summer clothing consisted of a hat,—a good wide-brimmed one,—shirt, and canvas trowsers, or over-alls, with occasionally a pair of boots. Such superfluities as waistcoats, collars, and socks we had discarded long ago. Even in the winter, when every one wore nearly his whole wardrobe, waistcoats and collars were not used, but about three shirts and three pairs

of trowsers were worn. I knew one man who had not worn a pair of socks for years. Of course he always wore high boots.

In the autumn we used all to go down the creeks gathering wild grapes or plums, or various other kinds of fruit which grew in great abundance. There were mulberries, gooseberries, raspberries, blackberries, cherries, strawberries, and pawpaws, the latter a large fleshy fruit somewhat similar to the banana. The grapes were more abundant than anything else. Vines hung on nearly every tree, or clambered over the great rocks with which the ravines are fringed, disputing possession with the Virginia creeper or the wild hop. The grapes, after being picked, were dried in the sun, and were very nice in the winter either stewed or made into pies.

In the cold weather, there being little for us to do at home, Jack and I would go over to Quinn's, and sometimes stop for two or three days, and have a fine time "tearing around," either rabbit-hunting or sleigh-riding, or sliding on the ponds—though the Quinn boys could not do much at that, for their father found that it wore out boots too much, and

made them stop it; so after trying it barefooted, and finding that it would not work, they were obliged to give it up.

At night we were a little crowded, as there was only one room, and we numbered sixteen persons in all—viz., Mr. and Mrs. Quinn, eleven children, Jack and I, and a young man named John Clover, who owned the next farm, and who lived and worked with the Quinns.

We were all arranged pretty comfortably in the following manner:—Mr. and Mrs. Quinn, and the two youngest children in one bed, the four girls in another, three or four boys in a third, and the remainder on the floor, which consisted of the bare earth.

In wet weather it was not quite so comfortable as might be wished, as the roof leaked, and rain and snow came in pretty badly. Still we got along very nicely altogether.

One slight drawback was that the old man had a habit of chewing tobacco as he lay in bed, but it did not cause much inconvenience to those on the floor, as he was a pretty good shot, and generally managed to reach the fireplace with the juice.

One Sunday, while staying with the Quinns,

they were favoured with a visit from a young man named Bill Harper, living some five or six miles away. He was quite a stranger, but finding some settlers on the prairie, came to make their acquaintance. Of course he was invited to stay and have dinner, and of course he accepted.

He made himself very agreeable, and during the meal he appeared to be very anxious that we should observe a ring, which he had upon his little finger, at one time reaching his hand out with the finger extended, and requesting some one to "pass the taters!" After dinner he took one of us aside to examine the article more closely, and told us in confidence that he had purchased it the previous day in town for the sum of ten cents = 5d.

Yet withal he was a sensible sort of young man, and knew what he was about on a farm or with a horse, etc.; in fact, the right sort of man for the country. In direct contrast to him was a young Englishman, whom the Quinns had met when out railroading, and of whom they were never tired of speaking.

A great deal of work is done there in the slack season by the farmers and others, who

take their teams and ploughs, and go to work building the new railroads at so much per day, camping out in the meantime.

On one of these occasions they had among their party one John Turney, an Englishman. What he had been used to before I can't say, but he had not been brought up as a cook, anyhow. One day it came to his turn to stay in camp and prepare the dinner. When the mealtime arrived all the hands came crowding round the waggon eager to begin, but they found everything but half-cooked.

"John," said Sam Quinn, "did these per-taters git warm?"

"Yes," replied John innocently, "they got *quite 'ot!*"

And we never heard the last of that little incident. The weather was never warm, it was "*quite 'ot!*"

Once in the wintertime when we two boys were over at Quinn's, we had a lively time with a prairie fire. An old Swede, living a little way north of their place, had accidentally set fire to the grass, and as there was a most terrific north wind blowing, the fire was down upon us in a moment. Old Andy Johnson

came in front of it, scorching himself whilst vainly endeavouring to check the progress of the flames by beating them with his coat. He arrived breathless and hatless just as the fire was coming over the crest of the hill in front of the house. We all ran out immediately, and set to work to "back fire" from the stables, and were only just in time to save the whole place from destruction, by burning a sufficiently wide piece of grass off, and thus stopping the rush of fire.

It was a bitterly cold day, and while working right amongst fire, moving a waggon out of the way, Jack got his hands frozen rather badly. Mrs. Quinn doctored him up though, and rubbed his hands with kerosene oil, etc., and they soon got well, without losing any fingers.

In a few minutes after the first alarm the fire had passed right by, and the whole face of the country was changed from a dry dead brown to an intense black, and ashes were blowing about in clouds. For a long time we could trace the progress of the fire by a thick column of smoke, and at night there was a red glow in the sky, showing that it was still burning miles away.

During the first spring that we were there we saw several antelopes, but we were never able to kill any. One day Humphrey shot one and knocked it over, but it got up again, and although three of us rode after it for some miles, we never came up with it.

The Quinns had a young one for a pet. They had ran it down when very small, and took it home and tamed it. It was a beautiful creature, and very tame, though timid. It lived for about a year and a half, and was then kicked by a horse, which broke two of its legs, and so was obliged to be killed. All the children were very sorry to lose it, they had grown so fond of it.

Some few miles from us lived the Garretts, an English family. They had not been used to farming, and did not succeed particularly well. Mrs. Garrett did not get along in what is usually considered the woman's department at all. She was not much of a cook, and as to milking a cow—"Oh! I can't, it feels so nasty!" said she at her first trial, and so poor old Garrett always had that job.

Near them lived a family named Samaurez, of Spanish descent. They rather considered

themselves "some pumpkins," and their status may perhaps be summed up in the words of one of the Quinn boys. "They've got two kinds of sugar, and don't they just look at yer if you put white sugar in your coffee, or yaller sugar in your tea!"

One evening during our first spring Humphrey, Jack, and I attended a party. It was at a stranger's house, and we had not received any regular invitation, but the fact of there being a party was made known, and every one in the neighbourhood was at liberty to go.

It was rather a peculiar gathering. There was no dancing and no music, and the time was principally spent in eating and drinking, and playing at silly, childish games, mostly after the style of "Kiss in the Ring," but with all sorts of queer names to them. Most of them were accompanied by singing. The words of one ran something like this:—

"This is the Queen of Dover,
This very day sailed over,
Sailed over the sea.
Most gracious Queen, you must not be offended,
For you shall be attended
With all the respects that we owe."

But I do not really know what took place during the game. I know there was a deal of shuffling about, something like "Sir Roger de Coverley" without the music.

Another ran :—

" Now the mink is in the barn,
And the cattle are on the farm,
Gold of the best, it shall be paid,
And on her lips it shall be laid."

And then somebody kissed some other body.

Another was :—

" How d'ye git along, Jim along o' Josy?
How d'ye git along, Jim along o' Jo?
Hitch my oxen to your cart,
Go to the river and git a load o' bark."
" How d'ye git along, Jim?" etc.

" Fire in the mountains! run, boys! run, boys!
Fire in the mountains! run, boys, run!
Cat's in the cream jug! run, girls! run, girls!
Cat's in the cream jug! run, girls, run!"

Then there was a general stampede.

The best of it is that there are a great many Methodists and others who look upon dancing as an unpardonable sin, and yet do not object to games of this kind. In fact, upon this occasion some game or other was proposed, but ruled out and strongly objected to, especially by one young lady, the daughter of a Methodist

parson, as "it was too much like dancing." But she played in the other games, and seemed to enjoy them, kissing included. This I thought rather inconsistent.

None of our party took part in any of these games, and we left early, voting it rather slow.

Bill Harper was present on this occasion, ring and all, and he was the only person there with whom we were acquainted.

At that early date such gatherings were not very frequent, but now they occur more often, and several of the settlers have such luxuries as pianos and harmoniums; and as there are more people to attend now, dances are frequently got up in the winter, much to the scandal and annoyance of the "Puritan Father" portion of the community.

Sometimes, too, a "social" is turned into a dance after the Methodists have gone home.

"Jack," says the host, "just watch till you see the pious folk about to git, and then you ride off like the dickens for a fiddler, while I walk around and tell the girls that ain't too good that we're going to have a dance. You bet we'll have a high time yet." And so they do, and keep it up till daylight.

CHAPTER IV.

SNAKE STORIES, ETC. I

Our first acquaintance.—A novel weapon.—A false alarm.—
A narrow escape.—A curious sight.—Instinct of pigs.—
Our decision, and how we kept it.—Snake hunts.—Another
kind of wild cat.—Varieties of snakes.—An easy victim.
—Frogs and snakes.—Game.—Figure 4 traps.—Edible
and other prairie plants.

WHILE wandering about the country one Sunday afternoon during our first spring, we came across our first snake.

My father and I were walking along the dry bed of a stream, when I saw a tremendous snake coiled up on a pile of drift wood, and I set up a yell (you must remember that I was only just eleven years old, and it was my first; I never yelled afterwards at a snake). My father lifted me up a bank about three feet high that was in front of us, and sprang up himself, and then asked what was the matter. I motioned to him to be silent, and then pointed

below to where the snake still lay as though asleep.

As we had nothing to attack the thing with we reluctantly passed on after looking at it some little time. Presently, however, we came to some young trees, so we cut a long pole with my big knife, and then went back to settle the business.

We approached very cautiously, so as not to awaken the snake, and then my father, dropping on one knee at the top of the bank, dealt the reptile a most tremendous blow. No movement followed, so the dose was repeated, still with a like result, and upon pulling the snake up on the bank, we found that it had been dead for some time, as the insects had begun to bore holes in it and eat it. It was a bull snake about six feet long, and not considered poisonous.

We did not always find them dead though. Shortly after this five of us were returning from a bath, and came across a rattlesnake all alive and kicking, or rather jumping. After a short consultation, having nothing with us more formidable than towels, my father took off one of his long Wellington boots for a

weapon, and hopping on one foot, very cleverly killed the wretched thing. On the same journey, when a little nearer home, and while passing through some very long grass by the side of a stream, we were rather scared by a very loud and strange noise close to us in the tangle. Thinking it might be some dangerous wild animal, one of us rushed to the house for a couple of guns, while the others kept watch. Upon the arrival of the firearms, the contents of two barrels were poured into the spot from whence the noise came, and what do you think was the result?

We had simply killed an old heron, who was sitting on her nest over her young ones!

Our next experience with snakes was when Jack and I were walking to Parkersville one day. There was a little bit of a track worn by this time over the grass, and I saw two rattlesnakes lying in the beaten-down grass, and jumped over them just in time to avoid treading on them. Again we were unfortunate in having no weapon with us, and had to pass on, carefully remarking on the place, so that we might be prepared on our return should they still be there.



1. SNAKE-KILLING—A TICKLISH JOB.



2. SNAKE-KILLING—AN EASY ONE.





A CURIOUS SIGHT.

[To face page 63.]

When we came back one of our neighbours was with us, carrying an axe, and upon reaching the spot we found the snakes not far away, and he soon cut them in pieces.

One morning my father was just going to pull on his long boots in the house, and finding that one of them felt rather heavy he shook it, and out rolled a rattlesnake. I guess that was rather a narrow squeak.

On one occasion Humphrey went out to feed the hogs, and upon looking into the sty occupied by the old sow and her family of ten, he found a rattlesnake lying with the busy little ones, taking some refreshment. They all seemed very happy together, with the exception of one poor little fellow, who was of course crowded out.

Humphrey called us all out to see this curious sight, and then the snake was dragged out and killed with a pitchfork. Some people might doubt the accuracy of this statement, and I almost think that I should had I not seen it myself. I had heard before of cows being milked by snakes, but not pigs, as the two are mortal enemies; but in this case the old sow was asleep, or she would not have allowed it.



A pig, if attacked by a snake, if it is a venomous one, will lay down and present its face, and let the snake bite it in the cheek several times, where it seems to take no effect. When the venom is exhausted in this way for the time being, the pig will get up and calmly take hold of the snake and rend it to pieces. In the case of a non-venomous snake the pig will not take so much trouble, but will at once attack it and eat it. So much for the instinct of pigs.

All these little incidents made us rather nervous at first, and we boys declared that we would never go about without thick boots and leather leggings on, but "Familiarity breeds contempt;" and before the summer was over we had got used to such things, and were running about without boots or stockings on, as is the custom there among boys in hot weather. By this practice the soles of our feet became like leather, and I have often stood upon a cactus and felt nothing of the prickles.

Sometimes Jack and I, and three or four Quinns would get up a snake hunt. Taking one or two dogs with us, and a large pole for

a lever, we would go and pry up big rocks, and look under them for snakes, and then haul them out and kill them. We often settled a good many in this way with sticks and stones.

It was rather dangerous work perhaps, but no one was ever hurt. We were all pretty nimble, and could get out of the snake's way when he jumped, and the chances were that his back would be broken before he coiled for another spring.

One day, when out on this business down a creek, our dogs chased a cat that had left civilisation and taken to the woods. They ran her pretty close until she sprang up a big hickory tree, from which, though, we soon dislodged her.

The tree was about sixty feet high, and she went almost to the top, but I followed, and soon shook her down. She then took to earth, disappearing down a hole under a big rock.

We set to work digging and poking about for a while, until presently, instead of the cat, out rolled—a six-foot bull snake. Of course, as we were out hunting for snakes and not for cats, this served our purpose as well,

and after settling his hash we left the cat in peace.

Now and then we came across the "blue-racer" snake, but never managed to kill one, for, as its name implies, it is a quick traveller; in fact, it is no sooner seen than gone, like a flash of greased lightning with the brake off.

Another mystery to us was the glass snake, so called from its brittleness; for with a slight blow it would break in two. Moreover, it is supposed to possess the marvellous property of being able to join itself together again after an accident, but I am inclined to think this a popular delusion. I have never proved it by experience, although after having apparently killed one—broken it into several pieces and leaving it—it had singularly disappeared, as though the head had come back to gather up the remainder, (for the head and front part generally managed to escape). This matter I must leave for settlement to others better versed in this branch of zoology than myself.

Another kind of snake, and one that we were not at all fond of, was the mocassin, a poisonous snake very similar in size and colour to the rattlesnake, but generally to be found

in the water. For this reason it behoved us to be careful in going in to swim, or we might find our bath occupied.

There was another kind of water snake, a little harmless thing, that we paid no attention to, often being in the water at the same time.

All kinds are now beginning to get quite scarce, as nobody passes one if he can possibly kill it. Sometimes we had hard tussels, and sometimes they were found in such positions as to fall an easy prey to our tender mercies.

One day Humphrey found a big bull snake down a hole which had been dug for a fence post. All he had to do then was to ram away at the "critter" with the post. It was like using a big pestle and mortar.

Occasionally we would be guided to a snake by the cries of a frog, and would find the poor thing halfway down the snake's throat, with his legs crushed out of all shape. The snake then became our victim by way of a change.

Once we found a big snake that had just swallowed a smaller one; it was lying almost helpless, with the other's tail protruding from its mouth. We then killed two with one stone.

Small game was very plentiful, such as prairie chickens, quails, snipes, wild ducks, rabbits, and jack-rabbits. The latter were large creatures, closely resembling the English hare, but more of a fawn colour. Like the hare, they do not burrow in the earth, but lie close in the grass; sometimes so still would they sit, in the hope of not being seen, that we have been able to throw ourselves on them and catch them.

Occasionally, if on the high flat prairie, we used to run them down on horseback; but it was a hard run, as they were very swift, and went in long bounds like a kangaroo.

The snipes used to amuse us a good deal by the trouble they took to lead us from their nests when disturbed. If we rode close by a snipe on her nest in the grass, she would spring out and flutter away, as though her wing was broken, at the same time piping most mournfully, as though in great pain. If we followed she continued the game until we got about fifty yards from the nest, when she would fly away safe and sound, uttering a noise which one could almost fancy was a laugh at our being duped.

Of course to any one in the secret it was vain work on her part, as, directly a bird flew up in such a commotion, one knew that the nest was close by.

With the commencement of autumn there



PRAIRIE CHICKEN.

were hundreds of wild geese, cranes, brant, swans, etc., flying south to their winter quarters among the lagoons of the Mississippi and other regions, only stopping at night to feed, so that we seldom got a shot at them, as they flew so high.

In the spring they flew north again, on their way to the great lakes. They looked very pretty in their great V-shaped flocks, and made a great noise as they flew.

In the winter we used to catch a great many prairie fowls in traps.

We would put a big box on top of a figure 4 piece, and throw some Indian corn under for bait, and would sometimes catch as many as three or four of these large birds at one time.

One year we had a small patch of land sown with buckwheat, but as it was not very good, it was never carried, and the prairie fowls used to come there in swarms when the snow was on the ground. As we had four traps, we nearly lived on prairie fowls that winter.

They seemed very simple in that respect, although wary enough as regards shooting them, for when feeding thus in a field there was usually a sentinel perched upon the fence.

Quails are very easily caught in traps also, and as they always keep close together in a covey, we sometimes caught nine or ten at once. I remember Humphrey killing eighteen at one shot with a gun when in the woods.

A figure 4 trap is made in this way. A stout stick, sharpened like a chisel at the top end, is placed upright on the ground with a notched stick resting upon it in a sloping position. This second stick is also sharpened chisel-wise at one end, and it catches in a



FIGURE 4 TRAP.

notch in a third and longer stick. This one has another notch cut in its side, which catches on the first stick. The trap—box or tub, or whatever it may be—rests on the top of No. 2 stick, and binds all together. The bait is placed on or near the end of the long stick,

and a very slight touch is sufficient to drop the trap. This arrangement is said to have been invented by Daniel Boone, the old Kentucky settler, when his ammunition was all used up. He used to apply the principle to tremendous heavy logs to fall on and kill bears and deer.

There are several kinds of wild plants growing on the prairie which are edible, or at least useful medicinally. Wild onions, or shallots, were very plentiful. They grew encased in woody, fibrous coverings, which, when stripped off, disclosed a little kind of spring onion which was very nice.

Artichokes, too, were abundant, and another plant tasting exactly like celery. Then there was the wild tea-plant, a small bushy shrub with white flowers and crisp, bright green leaves, which, when picked and dried in the sun, made very good tea. Tea can also be made of the leaves of the raspberry canes, quite as good to my taste as the ordinary Chinese beverage.

Then there was also a herb which we used as medicine for any little disorder inside. Besides these there was a peculiar plant known as rosin weed, from which exuded a

gum which the girls and boys used to gather for chewing. Chewing gum is much sold in the towns, but it is of a different material to this. Another plant was known as "snake-weed." One was popularly supposed to find a snake under it, but this rule did not always hold good, though we certainly found snakes near the weeds sometimes.

It was rather a peculiar weed, something like a broad bean, with flowers of the lupin kind. Sensitive plants also abounded on the rocky upland, the leaves of which all closed up upon being touched.

They had beautiful pink flowers with a most lovely scent.

CHAPTER V.

FARMING AND HERDING.

Our crops.—Pig killing.—First Christmas on the prairie.—
Losing cattle.—Visited by Indians.—Cold weather.—
Moving our house.—Building stone.—Our mule and
pony.—Soap-making.—Indian corn.—Our family party
gets smaller.—The blue bird.—The Prices.—Our herd.—
Sleeping out of doors.—Cooking frogs.—Bad water.—
Breaking up.—The prairie fire.

ALTHOUGH the first year crops are never expected to be so good as those grown on older land, owing to the sods being so full of roots that it takes some time to decay, we still got in a very fair quantity of seed, more particularly of small grain—wheat, oats, and rye. Indian corn does not grow so well as these on sod land.

We had a big patch of sorghum, and that grew first-rate. The "garden truck," too, was very prolific, as of course on a small patch of land we were better able to pulverise the soil than on a whole field. Some pumpkins grew

to a tremendous size, one measuring about two feet by eighteen inches, and turning the scale at sixty-eight pounds. Melons, squashes, cucumbers, tomatoes, and hosts of other things grew without any attention, and in such quantities that we used them to feed the pigs upon.

The pigs were easily maintained through the summer; for even if corn was scarce the produce of the garden and field was soon available for them, and in addition to this there were several kinds of weeds which grew close to hand, which formed very good food for them.

There were great bushy plants called "pig-weeds," which grew five or six feet high, which it was impossible for any one to pull up. We used, therefore, to cut them down with hatchets, and as they sprouted again and grew with great rapidity, we had a practically inexhaustible supply. These weeds form the usual summer food for pigs all about the country.

There was another kind very similar, called "Lamb's quarter," from the shape of its leaf, which in the spring, when young, was cooked and eaten like spinach.

In the winter we had a lively time pig-

killing. Humphrey always stuck the pigs, but we all helped at the scalding and scraping off of the bristles. Big hogs we always shot first to save the trouble of holding. On one occasion Parker wished to try his hand at sticking pigs, but after one was caught and got in position, he backed out, saying that he did not like to.

We used to keep a pig in the house during the winter to cut from—a dead one. It used to hang in one corner of the room over the flour barrel, and was frozen as hard as a board. We used just to take a hatchet and cut off as much as we wanted to fry.

Time ran on, and Christmas soon came round, the first we had spent on the prairie, though not in the States—that one we had spent at Junction City.

We had a very quiet time, but managed to get up a very good spread, with a regular Christmas pudding. For the latter a special journey had been made to town for the various ingredients, all of which we obtained without much trouble, with the exception of suet. As our staple food was pork, and there were no butchers in town, we were rather in a fix, and

thought our pudding would suffer, until at last we got hold of some buffalo suet from a hunter returning from the west. Despite a few minor accidents our pudding was a great success, and we had quite a banquet with roast sucking-pig, wild ducks, and prairie fowls.

This winter was much more severe than the one we had spent in Junction City, and the cattle suffered exceedingly. Of course we had had no experience, and did not know what provision to make for the winter either with regard to shelter or food. To begin with, our corral was on the side of a hill facing the north, instead of the south, as it ought to have done, and we built no sheds, except for the horses. Then, although we had got in a good lot of hay, the cattle were just allowed to help themselves, and the consequence was that they burrowed great holes in the sides of the stack, and wasted it to a fearful extent.

We had some exceedingly cold weather and a late spring, and lost nearly half of the cattle we started with.

One day we had two Indians come in to beg, and our frozen pig took their fancy very much. We gave them quite a large piece, but it did

not seem to meet their views exactly, as one began to chop with his hand at the place he would like it cut, and to tell us in pantomimic language how many "papooses" (children) he had at home in his wigwam. One was very anxious to know if the old plated forks which we had brought from England were "siller." They took their departure after a while with their pork and some flour, and after having a good feed.

They seemed to have spread a good report of our hospitality among their brethren, for we were visited by a good many for some time, but we told them that we had nothing for them, and then they ceased to come.

The Indians which were about here were a very mongrel lot; they had very few of the supposed attributes of the "noble red man" of Fenimore Cooper.

They went about hunting and fishing, and trying to beg, borrow, or steal all they could, doing anything so as to live without working. If there were any deer in the neighbourhood, they were sure to get them, as they would follow them for days.

I spoke of frozen pork in the house just now.

The winter there is about cold enough to "freeze the hair off an Arctic dog," as the saying goes. It was a matter of no small difficulty to write a letter to the old country in the winter, as the ink was frozen a solid lump, and had to be kept on the stove while in use.

While sitting round the red-hot stove at breakfast, one's coffee would freeze in a very short time if placed on the table a few feet from the fire.

If by chance we left our tin pail full of water when we went to bed, we could hear it popping away during the night like a pistol, as it expanded with the frost, and in the morning the water would have changed into a solid block of ice.

Hot water thrown into the air out of doors would come down as hail. During weather like this we had to be mighty careful how we handled iron or steel, for the frost in an axe or hammer would cause it to cling to a damp hand.

Once Humphrey was driving in some nails in the stable, and thoughtlessly put some in his mouth. He was obliged to go to the house and get some hot water before he could

remove them. If he had attempted to pull them out the skin and flesh would have come too.

What a treat it was to sit down and milk a cow in such weather! It was as much as the milk was worth. We never kept more than one in milk through the winter, and not always that, so that butter was rather scarce, unless we had enough salted down.

It was quite a matter of discussion, too, as to who should get up and light the fire, as no one liked to turn out first on a cold morning. There was a sort of general watching and waiting all round to see if some one else would not make a start. Our blankets were a sight in the morning. A person's form would be outlined in hoar frost, and around the head the clothes were frequently frozen quite hard, where the breath had come through; for it was almost impossible to keep one's head from under the cover.

Our house being only of boards, it was not very warm, for the wind would come whistling through like a knife; but we managed to improve it after a while, putting dry earth in between the two boards—the outer feather-edge and the inside match-boards—for a few

feet up all round, and by degrees we papered nearly all the walls with pictures from the English illustrated papers, which were sent to us by friends at home in the old country.

Cooking was about the nicest occupation in winter, especially as most of our food was fried; we lived principally on fried pork and flap-jacks,—the latter a kind of pancake,—varied occasionally with Johnny cake and fried mush, both made from Indian corn meal.

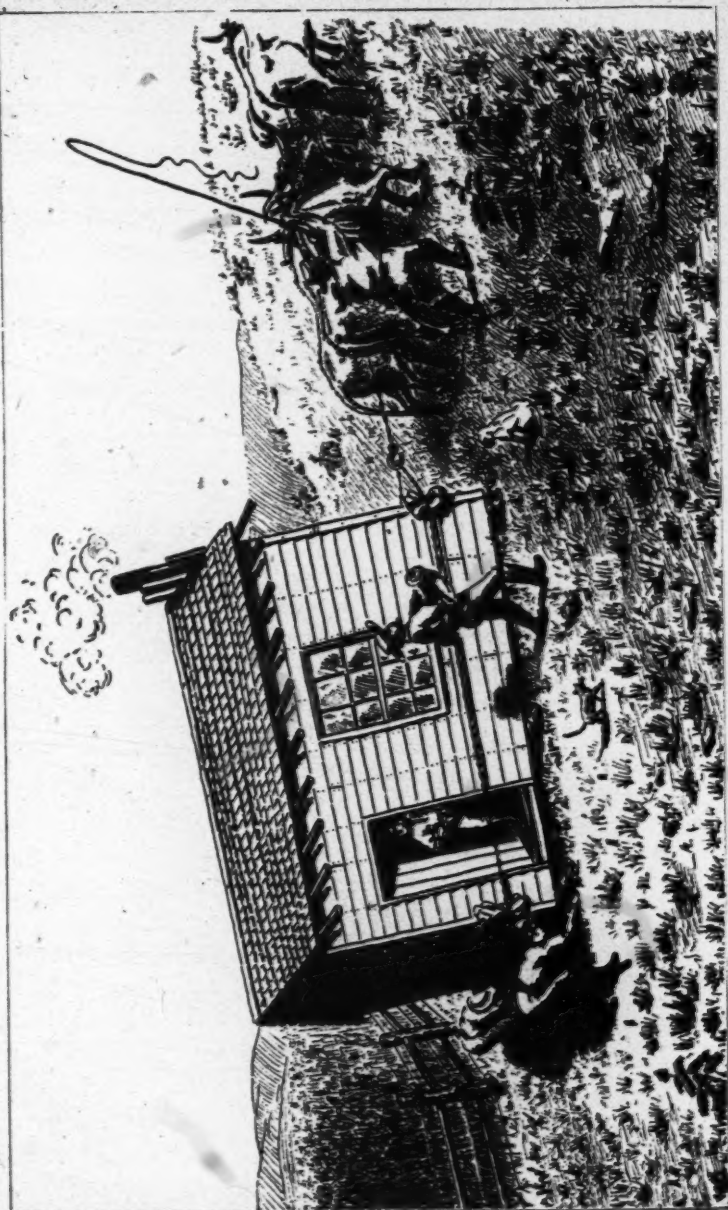
Wood-chopping was about the best out-of-door work to get on to, as one could manage to keep warm at that. I do not know quite what the thermometer stood at during the coldest weather, as ours got broken, but I saw it once in town showing thirty degrees below zero, or sixty-two degrees of frost,—Fahrenheit,—but I have no doubt that it was colder than that sometimes up on the open prairie where we lived. I have often known a pond to freeze over sufficiently in one night to bear any number of persons or cattle on it. But our springs never froze over; the water came out of the warm earth, and would run for a few yards down the stream before freezing. They sometimes, in a storm, were completely

hidden by drifts, when it was a fine treat to have to find them, going probing about with a pole, and sometimes finding ourselves going through the crust of snow up to our boot-tops in the water which we were trying to find. We were bound to keep them open both for ourselves and the cattle. After one heavy fall that we had, we boys had some fine fun in the drifts. There was a slight thaw, and then the hard frost again, so that the snow was pretty well bound together, and we carved in a big drift a regular cave or house with several partitions, and a roof over all—which lasted nearly all winter.

When once the winter begins in earnest there are very few changes for four or five months. The poor cattle and other stock suffer a great deal from the cold. Cows are often seen with their ears and tails frozen off, and dogs and cats the same, while the combs and feet of poultry get rather badly used up, too. The pigs seem to be able to take care of themselves pretty well.

Our house was built on the side of a hill facing the north, and as just across the ravine there was another hill, the view was rather





MOVING.

contracted, although we could look down the ravine a good distance to the head of Davis' Creek. After a while, therefore, we began to get tired of the position, and so moved the house to the top of the hill at the back of us.

We got Will Hopkins and his six yoke of oxen and another neighbour to come and help us. We smoothed the hill a little, pulling up the stones which cropped out, and cut down the little sumac bushes, and then, having prepared several small wooden rollers, we hitched a log-chain around the edifice and started the bullocks. Of course the progress was rather slow, as the rollers had to be kept carried to the front, but still we sailed along in safety, Parker remaining inside the whole time cooking the dinner. The new position was a decided improvement as regards the view, but, if possible, it was rather more bleak in the wintertime, perched up on top of the hill.

We commanded a most extensive view of the prairie, and before I left we could see about seven houses, although at the time of moving there were none in sight. The country is now settling up very fast.

We had splendid stone about our place,

which was quarried without much difficulty, and was easily worked up. There was also plenty of flat surface rock, which was most useful for rough walls for stables or cowsheds, and from the sides of the ravines great blocks of limestone, mostly about three feet thick, cropped out. This could be split up into convenient sizes, and faced up to any degree of smoothness for house-building.

Near at hand, by digging a little way, we came upon soap-stone, but it was in small flaky pieces, and of no use except for filling in rough walls. It was quite soft, almost like cheese, and could be cut with a knife, or bitten through with the teeth. There was a spot a mile or so north of us though, where it was to be found in large blocks in the side of a hill, and this we utilised a bit. It was remarkably soft when first quarried, but when exposed to the air became almost as hard as flint. At one time we were going to make a chimney pot of it, as it was so easy to work, and had got it squared up and hollowed out a good bit, when for some reason it was laid by for a few weeks. Upon going to finish the job we found that it had got so hard that our tools

would scarcely touch it, so we used it for a pig-trough, and cut out a new chimney pot while the stone was soft and fresh. We had to put a stone pot to the chimney, because our iron stove-pipe had set fire to the house once, and it had a narrow escape of being destroyed.

Amongst our various animals we had a queer couple—a mule that no one could ride, and a pony that no one could work. The mule was a splendid thing to pull, but there was only about one man in the country who could ride him. My father bought him to work in harness, and he worked first-rate; hitch him to anything, and he would pull his heart out, or something had to go. His former owner was a tremendous Swede, and he could manage to stick on his back somehow; I think his legs were about long enough to tie in a knot round the mule. I never knew any one else who could sit it out.

He lent him to a neighbour once to ride to town. They started all right, but somehow, after going a very short distance, the man came back leading the mule, and "guessed he'd walk." After we had him Humphrey and Jack both tried to ride him, but although

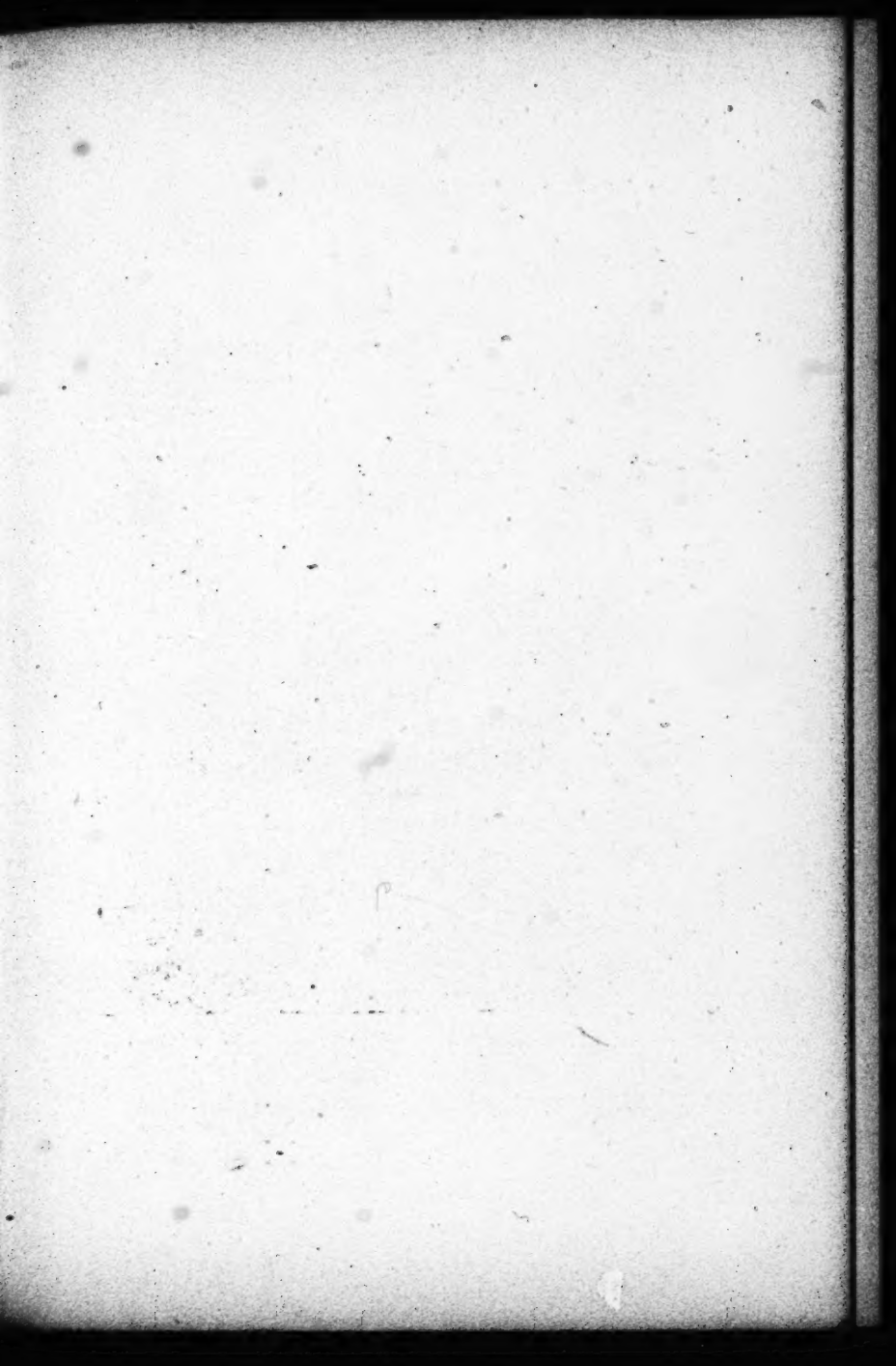
they could usually keep a pretty firm seat, they could not stick to that mule.

The pony was the exact reverse of this. He was an Indian pony, captured by the soldiers



SADDLING UP.

during a skirmish, and had a great gap in his withers from a sabre cut. He was one of the nicest riding ponies I ever sat on; he could lope along all day with an easy motion about





A RUNAWAY TEAM—"SOMEWHAT MIXED" [To face page, 87.]

like a rocking-chair. He was very useful for driving cattle, as he would grab at them with his teeth to hurry them on, and a movement of the body was enough to turn him in any direction, almost without using the bridle.

But put him in harness, and then stand back! for there's going to be a smash-up. His eye glances out an evil fire, his nostrils dilate, his ears are thrown back, and in a second he bolts. He will not stop till he gets free from all incumbrances, or gets into such a position that he can go no more. One day we were going to hitch him to the waggon with the mule, but before they were fastened to it—simply harnessed and connected together with the pole-yoke—away he started. He dragged the mule along until he got excited too, and together they rushed into a wire fence. That stopped them, and if that was not a mix up I never saw one. They both went down amid the ruins of the fence, where they kicked, and struggled, and plunged until we thought we should never extricate them.

But at last we got them out, and found them not so much hurt as we expected, though the pony had a nasty cut in his leg, and the

harness was pretty badly used. One had rolled over the other, so that when at last we got them on to their feet the pony was where the mule ought to be, and *vice versa*.

Another time we were going to give them a trial, and had hitched the pony to the waggon, and were bringing up the mule to him, when he started off, broke loose from Jack who was holding him, and rushed away down the hill with the waggon behind him. Of course the pole was almost on the ground, but not quite low enough to catch in anything, and so away he dashed, colliding with the pig-sty, and only just missing the house; and was at length brought to a standstill by rushing into the stream at the bottom of the ravine, where he stuck fast, the pole breaking off short in the mud. After that we only used him for riding.

Soap-making was one of our occasional jobs, and was by no means a nice one. The soap is made in the following manner. All the wood ashes are saved from the stove (taking care, however, that there are no walnut-wood ashes amongst them, or they will spoil the lot), and put in a dry wooden hopper.

When this gets full, and the soap-boiling day is near at hand, water is poured on the ashes and allowed to soak through gradually to the bottom, where the now dark-brown liquid is caught in a trough, and drained into a large pot or bucket. This is the lye or potash, and it is boiled down with all kinds of fat, bacon rinds, etc., which have also been saved up by degrees for this purpose. After several hours' boiling this combination forms a slippery, slimy mass—soft soap. It is usually kept in this condition ready for various uses—washing, scrubbing, or scouring.

The addition of a little salt in the boiling transforms it into hard soap of a dirty-grey colour.

During this, our second spring, the land being more suitable for it, we planted a great quantity of Indian corn. It is planted in "hills," three or four seeds in each, about four feet each way. For marking the places where the corn is to be planted, after the land is ploughed and harrowed, a sort of sledge with four or five runners is drawn over the field, which marks grooves at the required distance apart. It is then driven across at

right angles, and at the intersection of the grooves the corn is planted, either by hand and covered with a hoe, or else with a small machine. In a short time it is out of the ground, and, growing very rapidly, is soon ready for "cultivating." This consists of going over it twice at right angles with a horse-hoe or "cultivator," cutting up the weeds, and throwing the earth up to the roots.

"Cultivating" is rather pleasant work, not quite so heavy as ploughing, and requires a little skill to avoid injuring the growing corn. It always amuses me to contrast the method of ploughing in England with that practised in the States. In the old country it appears to be usual to take three horses, one behind another, a small boy with a big whip to drive them, and a man to do the ploughing. Now in America a boy can run the whole thing. The reins are round his neck, the whip is fastened by a thong to his hand, the ploughs are made lighter, the three horses are worked abreast, and a great saving of labour is the result. I have ploughed acre after acre in this way from when I was twelve years old.

A good lot of corn is cut as soon as it

is nearly ripe, and shocked for cattle food in winter, and makes first-rate fodder. Corn shocking is done in the following way. Having settled where the shock shall be, which is usually about every twelfth hill, you take two stalks at opposite angles of a square of four hills, and bend them down and bind them together securely. Then you take the other two stalks, and bind them together and round the first two. This forms a kind of cross rack, against which the other stalks may be placed when cut. Those first cut are stood in the angles almost upright, and others placed around, gradually sloping outwards until a regular cone is formed, which will require a very strong wind to blow over, and a very heavy rain to wet through. The outer stalks get discoloured, but those inside keep a nice green colour, and are much relished by the cattle in the winter, when the husking has been done.

Walter Woods, the printer, left us this spring, and obtained a good situation at Lawrence, a town on the eastern borders of the State. He stayed there awhile, and afterwards went to Colorado, and made considerable money at his

business. While out in the Rockies he met his brother, who was on the way back from Australia, and so returned with him to England.

Some few months later Parker left our happy family, and having heard of Walter's success in the printing line, he went into a printing office down south, though quite ignorant of the work. He stayed there some time, and then we heard that he had joined a Government surveying party, but as his sight was very bad he had to give it up. After trying several trades he eventually settled down to the printing in a newspaper office, and the last I heard of him was that he was the Editor of the *Arkansas Scout*.

Parker was a very enthusiastic sportsman, but his shortsightedness was rather a drawback to his success in this branch. Once he went with Humphrey to shoot some wild ducks that were in the pond, and when the ducks rose and Humphrey shot at them, Parker shot at the pond. At one time he was very busy collecting birds for a friend in town, and we boys finding a piece of blue paper, thought that we would help swell the collection. We arranged the paper among the grass by the stream, and went to the house and told Parker

that there was a splendid blue bird outside. He came out with his gun and carefully drew near while we boys kept in the rear, so as not to frighten the bird, all the time laughing fit to split.

Presently he fired, and rushed forward and secured—the piece of blue paper. He did not seem to enjoy the joke half so much as we did. Perhaps we ought to have been a little more considerate. But we were boys, and could not help having some fun with him. One day, he mistook a horse for a cow at a very short distance—he was so very shortsighted.

Walter Woods' land was taken by an old man named Price, and a queer old stick he was, too. He brought with him his wife, and two sons, Othaniel and George. His other son, "Dan'l," he had left "back at the Bluffs." (Council Bluffs in Iowa, from whence they had emigrated.) The old man was an awful braggart, and the whole family were as ignorant as savages, George being the only one who could read or write a little bit. The old man was never tired of telling us how once he was out in the forest cutting wood, and he saw a "painter" (panther) up a tree just in the act

of springing on him. As the beast came flying through the air down on him, he stepped back with axe uplifted, and as the "painter" reached the earth, with one fell swoop he cut his head clean off.

This tale we had on an average once a week. The family lived in a "dug-out" just across the ravine facing our house, and were as poor as church mice, having no stock, horses, or tools. Still they managed to rub along somehow by working among the neighbours, and getting their land ploughed for them in return.

Their dug-out was a wretched place to live in, as such places usually are. A hole is dug in the side of a hill, a few forked posts are put in the corners, poles are laid in the forks, brush and straw are put on, the poles, the earth dug out of the hole is thrown over the straw as thick as will keep out rain, and with a door in front and a chimney cut in the bank, the house is ready for occupation. They are warm enough in the winter, but are miserably dirty, as there is no floor but the earth, and the walls are of the same material; besides which dirt is liable to shake down through the roof. Still such are the only kind of houses that can be

built by poor emigrants on the prairie, who have no money to spare for boards, and many live in them for a year or two.

Very often on a winter morning Jack and I would go over to have a talk, and the old lady always wanted to play a game of cards directly she had washed the "brekster dishes." Seven-up, euchre, and poker were the usual games.

While the "brekster dishes" were being washed the old man would probably go on about his "painter," or would have us remember that his "ineeshals" were E. B. P.—Edward Bates Price, which there was little danger of us forgetting, as he seemed to take a peculiar pride in his three names. Interspersed with this edifying information we would have reminiscences of "Dan'l" and the "Bluffs," which seemed to comprise the whole of his subjects of discourse.

They were a funny old couple, and afforded us a good deal of amusement. The old man was a very tall, dried-up specimen, never to be seen without a quid of tobacco in his cheek, while the old lady was very short and very stout, and fond of a pipe. The Prices did not stay very long on their land, but traded it off to a

newcomer, and went back to "Dan'l" and the "Bluffs."

Another winter passed over us, and having had some dear experience, we were able to take better care of our cattle this year.

Although it was very cold during this winter, we had some heavy falls of snow. One night before they left the Prices got snowed up entirely in their dug-out.

Being rather low, the edifice was completely covered with snow, so that nothing but a mound was visible. They had considerable trouble to get out, for the door opened outwards, and the drift was so deep and packed so tight that they could not push the door open at all. They therefore had to cut the hinges,—they consisted simply of old bits of leather,—and taking the door inside they burrowed their way out.

During this long, cold snap, the roads being impassable, we ran out of firewood. We could not get down to our timber patch, and could not even get down the creek to do a little "jay-hawking." We were obliged to burn our fence posts and rails. Plenty of people who had no fences used Indian corn for fuel.





BRINGING IN THE HORSES FROM THE PRAIRIE.

[To face page 97.]

Our house being moved, we also moved our corral over to the south side of the hill, and we built a good stone wall on three sides of it, with a roofed shed all along, and thus kept nearly all our cattle through the winter. In the spring a herd law was passed, and so we boys got up a herd. There were forty head of cattle of our own, and we took in our neighbours' cattle at a quarter of a dollar a month per head, and thus mustered quite a respectable number.

Jack being older than I, and consequently more useful on the farm, the herding business generally fell to my lot. It was not particularly easy work; up at four o'clock in the morning to bring the horses in from the prairie, clean and saddle my pony, "Barney;" help milk a dozen cows; and then get through breakfast, to be ready to let the cattle out of the corral by seven o'clock. Then came the long hot day, often to be seated in the saddle the whole time, twelve hours or more, checking the restless brutes from straying; but at last the sun would work round to the west, and sink beneath the horizon, which was the signal for returning for the night to the corral. Then

the same performances were gone through again, the milking and the picketing out, and after that came supper, by which time it was rather dark and late, and I was ready to go to bed to prepare for the next day's round.

In the summer time, of which I am now speaking, the nights were not always of the pleasantest, for although generally cool and fresh after a hot day, the mosquitoes were enough to drive a man mad. As they were as bad, or perhaps worse in the house, we generally preferred to sleep out of doors—some in the waggon-bed, and some on the ground beneath.

We were frequently disturbed, though, during the night by thunderstorms, and would have to gather up our traps and rush for the house near by without a light, save for the vivid flashes of lightning, and would then have to arrange ourselves again to sleep on the floor for the remainder of the night. Still it was so much pleasanter out of doors that we tried it every night, unless it was too decidedly threatening. If we ever slept indoors the door was left open without fear of intruders, except it might be stray pigs.

There was not the least danger to be sus-

pected in leaving the door open at night. Such a thing as a robber entering is never thought of, and the door could not be locked if wanted, as it simply fastened by a latch. Honesty is, I think, one of the leading features which must strike a stranger fresh from the old country where tramps abound. Why, out here one takes his mowing machine out on the prairie to cut hay, and at night unhitches the team, leaving the machine out all night with his oil can, spanners, and tools, without the slightest risk. The axe is left sticking in the log in the woods, together with maul and wedges, as is the same with other tools about the farm, and I never heard of any one losing things thus exposed.

We had lightning almost every night during the summer, but usually so far away as not to deter us from making our beds out of doors. One fearfully hot, sultry night, when we had thought it too stormy-looking to try it, we had a fine treat.

Some eggs had been brought in in the evening and laid upon the crockery shelves as usual, and in the middle of the night one, doubtless a nest-egg, brought in by mistake,

burst with a report like a pistol, and a smell like—well, it was about “bad enough to knock a nigger down.” For awhile we could not make out whatever was the matter until a light was struck and the cause explained. The remainder of the night was passed out of doors despite the threatened storm.

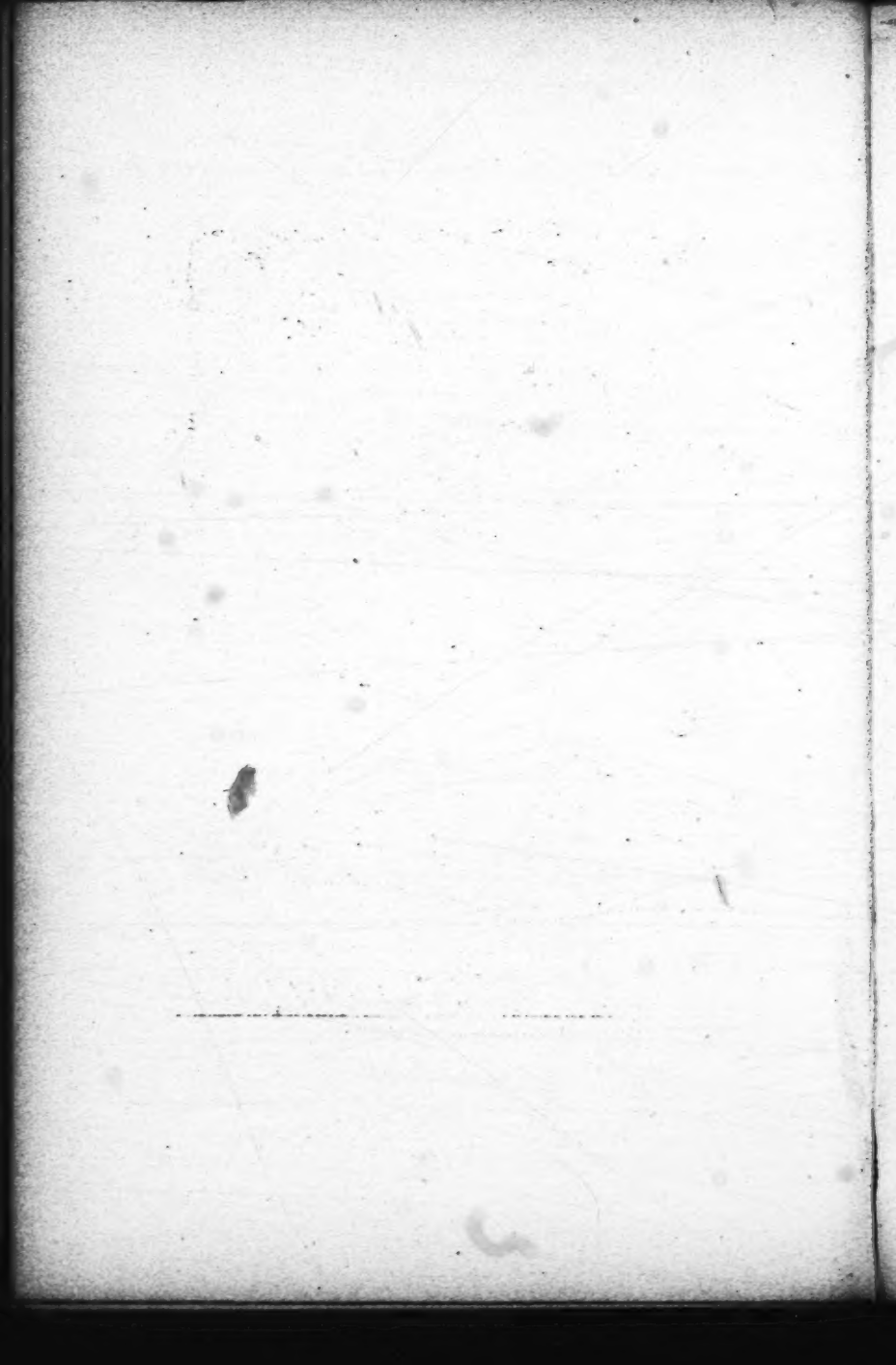
The herding life was dreadfully monotonous. The romance of riding about all day soon wears off if one has six months of it at a stretch in all weathers, rain, blow, or shine, Sunday or weekdays. Occasionally for days together I never saw a soul while out with the herd. Sometimes, however, I had a companion in one of the Quinn boys, who had two cows to attend to, and brought them to my herd and helped me. In the hot summer months, before the grass was dried up much, the cattle were not much trouble, but were glad, after feeding, to get in the shade of a few trees that grew on a small creek where I often herded.

Sometimes they would stand in the water for hours together, and we boys were able to go in swimming, or to catch fish or frogs, or craw-fish, which we cooked on a forked stick.



GOING DOWN TO WATER.

[To face page 100.



over a little fire, and thus made a welcome addition (frogs as well) to our cold dinner. I know that many people look upon frogs as dreadful things to eat, but I can recommend them as being very palatable. The legs are the only parts eaten, and when skinned and cooked closely resemble the best parts of a young fowl.

One day we had a big hunt after a bull-frog. We found him in a large pond and gave chase; of course he dived, but had to come to the surface every now and then, and presently came up quite close to where I was watching, and I gave him a blow with the butt-end of my stock-whip which killed him. We found him to be fifteen inches long from head to foot, and his legs formed a good meal.

As the weather grew hotter and drier the water began to get scarce, until at last, big ponds in which the water had been deep enough to swim a horse, became so dry that we were able to catch the big fish therein with our hands, and the water was so thick and nasty that it was not fit for the cattle to drink. Nevertheless, the sun being so fearfully hot, we boys were fain to drink this dirty cattle-

bestirred water. One would say to the other, "I'll drink some if you will," and "Right you are" would be the reply. I wonder we did not get awfully ill. There was a nice fresh spring about a mile away, but too small to be of any use to the cattle, and occasionally one of us would gallop up there, drink all he could himself, and fill our dinner pail for the other. It was too risky though to do this often, as the cattle were so liable to stray, and we could not drive them up near the spring, as it was close to an unprotected cornfield.

- If we had a shower we generally hid our clothes under a big rock, and then jumped into the pond to keep *dry*. We sometimes found it necessary, while in the water, to turn the cattle, and would then jump on the pony, just as we were, and rush away after them, yelling and popping the whip. A passer-by would have thought it a funny sight, no doubt, to see a boy in a state of nature rushing about on horseback. But we were not troubled with passers-by. It was very peculiar to feel the apparent warmth of the water in the pond during rain. It seemed several degrees warmer than the air or the rain falling.

Sometimes on Sundays the Quinn boys used to come down to where I was herding, and bring their dinners, and, together with my brother Jack, we had a regular picnic, fishing, swimming, eating wild grapes, etc.; but I was more frequently alone, as young Dick Quinn did not always care to come so far with his two cows, for sometimes I was away over north, as I liked to change the feeding-ground.

As the season passed on the grass became very dead and dry, and the herd was very hard to keep together; it was as much as one could do by keeping the pony on the move the whole time. By November, which was the time to break up the herd, the weather was cold and wet, and I was mighty glad to stop. Several times it rained the whole day, so that I was so wet that the water filled my boots, when I happened to be wearing such luxuries, and ran over the tops as I sat in the saddle.

One day I borrowed my father's macintosh, but in galloping about I split it right up the back, so that when it rained I just had to get wet through, but I am pleased to say that I never suffered any ill effects.

After all the cattle had been sent to their

respective owners for the winter, a prairie fire came along and pretty nearly wiped us out. It did so much damage that we had to send our own cattle away. It was a nice warm, bright day early in December, and I had the cattle in the corn-stalks to pick up any stray ears that had been left, and to eat the fodder, as the dry maize stalks are called. Presently I became aware that there was a prairie fire sweeping down on us from the north. I did not feel at all afraid, as we considered our place to be safe from such attacks, as our house and sheds, etc., were built on land lying between two streams, north and south, which met in the west, while the land to the east was in cultivation.

However, as there was a very strong north wind blowing, the fire leaped the stream on the north side where the grass grew high, and was amongst us in two seconds. A rush was made for the stables to cut the horses loose, and then all hands were required to protect the house, which was in imminent danger, owing to the wood pile having caught fire.

Fortunately, by pulling the pile down, and hurling the blazing logs away, and aided by

a good supply of water which was at hand, we were able to save the house from destruction. Our great straw stack was burned though, and nearly all our hay, together with a quantity of wheat which lay in a crib, besides the cattle corral, and a quantity of fencing, so that we had no place in which to keep the cattle, and nothing on which to feed them. We drove them to a neighbour's corral that night, and then made arrangements with a man on Thomas' Creek to keep them through the winter on payment of one-fourth of the number that survived. This plan is frequently adopted, as of course it is more to the interest of the man to look after them well. As we had forty head, he would have ten in the spring for his trouble, but several died, amongst the number the heifer of which I spoke as being my own personal property.

We certainly had very bad luck with our cattle, several getting drowned, or otherwise killed by accident at various times. One old cow I remember in particular; "Old Bones" we called her. She went into a miry place in the early spring to get some nice, green, tender grass, her hind feet being

on solid ground. Well, her front feet were in the mud, and they just sunk lower and lower, and her nose went into and under the water, and sank deeper and deeper, and there she stuck, and could not help herself, but just drowned as she stood. We did not find her until too late.

Another cow, a fine one, called "Granny," was picketed out, and got mixed up with the rope and strangled herself.

It was not an infrequent job to have to draw a cow out of the mud, especially in the spring, when they were weak after the long, cold winter. A rope was fastened round their horns or neck, and a team of horses hitched to it. Unfortunately they did not always recover, and then there was a skinning operation to be performed. I must confess that this latter was a job to which I was rather partial, though to some ideas not a pleasant occupation.

There is a good deal of attention and not a little skill required to get a hide off without cutting it, and I used to flatter myself that I could do it very cleanly.

CHAPTER VI.

I LEAVE HOME.

Economising.—Zedekiah Blake.—Wood-chopping.—Rabbit-hunting.—The trapper.—A touch of earthquake.—A creek accident.—Ague.—A touch of scurvy.—Scarcity of mutton.—A whisky accident.—Maloy.—Council Grove.—How to make dogs hardy.—A camp-meeting.

THIS winter, owing to our losses by the prairie fire, was rather a rough one for our family party. We had none too much produce left, and as regards cash—well, that always is a scarce article in the West, where our clothing and groceries are mostly obtained by trading corn, etc., in town. We therefore dispensed with a good many luxuries, such as coffee, sugar, etc. For the first, we roasted rye to mix with coffee, but eventually adopted it altogether, and it made a very decent drink. To sweeten it we used molasses—home-made treacle, of which we had about sixty gallons. This article is very much used. It is on the

table at every meal, the Americans often pouring it over their pork and beans. It is the produce of the sorghum-cane, a plant closely allied to the regular sugar-cane, but the syrup is rather more fruity than the regular treacle. Sugar can be made by boiling it down sufficiently, but it is seldom done. The cane is cut about the middle of September, the leaves and tops cut off, and then hauled to the mill. This is turned by horse-power, and when the cane is passed between rollers all the juice is squeezed out and caught in a trough. From here it is removed to a great boiler and boiled down to syrup, being skimmed from time to time. The canes, after being squeezed, are of no use save for burning or covering the roofs of sheds, etc., and are not eaten by cattle, although the leaves and seeds may be.

Broom-corn is a plant of very similar growth, but grows rather higher, twelve or fourteen feet, as a rule; and it always seemed to me that there was a dreadful waste of force somewhere, for the only part that is of any use is just the top, where the seeds grow. The tops are cut off about a foot long, and the seeds pulled off, leaving the stalks upon which they grow, which

are used to make our regular carpet-brooms and brushes of. All the rest of the stalk is burned.

We dispensed with oil during this winter, so that we could have no light at night; therefore, before it was dark we had our supper, and perhaps sat round the fire a little while, and then went to bed.

I escaped a lot of this, for, owing to the cattle being away, and there being little to do for four persons, I went down to spend the winter with an acquaintance on Monkre's Creek, some twenty miles south of our home.

Old Zedekiah Blake was a little shrivelled-up man with a big wife and an only child, a daughter of five-and-twenty. The old people were originally from England,—many years ago, in fact, before the daughter was born,—and had travelled pretty well all over the States.

They lived in a little old log-house, with but one room, with a small lean-to for a kitchen. The room served for all purposes save cooking. The meals were taken in it, and there were three beds in the corners (one being for any visitors or travellers that might happen to come that way). My roosting-place was on the floor

in the attic, which was reached by a ladder through a trap-door in the ceiling of the room. It was fearfully cold up there, with the wind and snow whistling through the chinks between the logs, and under the home-made split-oak shingles which formed the roof. I would often wake up to find my bed covered with snow, and drifts all over the floor.

My father came with me to Blake's, and after spending a day or two returned to the prairie, leaving me to help the old man through the winter. My wages were board, clothes, and lodging, which is about all one can reckon upon in winter, especially a boy. The old man was wintering a lot of cattle fresh from Texas for a man in town, so that there was plenty of work feeding and watering, and otherwise looking after their welfare.

Being winter time the herd law was not enforced, and, in fact, it is a dead letter down there, where all the farms are on the creek, where timber for fences is plentiful, and prairie settlers are scarce, as the high land is too poor. We were bothered a good deal by strange cattle, which seemed to wish to become acquainted with ours, especially about feeding-time.

All through this winter I worked mighty hard, cutting timber with the old man, and hauling it to town for sale. We used between us to cut two cords or more a day. A cord is a pile of wood six feet long by three feet high, and three feet wide, and is a good load for two horses over a rough country road. This quantity is a good day's work for a man, and as I guess that I cut as much as old Zedekiah, I think that I quite earned my pay. It was pretty heavy work, swinging an axe all day, or using a heavy beetle and wedges to split up the trunks of the trees after being felled. Still it was an agreeable change after the herding, and the home was more comfortable, and living better than up at the prairie, and there were some womenkind about.

On Sundays, too, I cleaned up a bit, and rode to meeting occasionally at the school-house, a thing quite unknown before. Some Sundays we would all go to spend the day with some friends of the Blakes. The old people would drive over in the buggy, while Miss Blake and I rode on horseback. Of course during my herding I had had considerable practice in riding, and one of my first jobs was to

break in a three-year-old colt to ride. She was rather vicious, but I managed all right, and did not get thrown at all. In fact, I do not remember ever having been absolutely thrown. I came a cropper a few times, owing to the horse falling under me, as when crossing the stream with the milk pail; and on another occasion I was riding a pony at a stone fence, when he caught his foot in the top and fell over. I went right over his head, turned a somersault, and came down on my back, and the pony stumbled over me, giving me a tread on the ribs as he passed on.

I was treated quite as one of the family, as is usual with farm "helps" over there. Miss Blake and I belonged to a singing-class conducted by Dick Utt, a neighbouring farmer, and we used to have a fine time riding about to spend the evening at the various houses where they met for practice. We used also to have spelling-bees and other entertainments at the school-house.

Occasionally, when the snow was deep on the ground, and we could not work well in the woods, I would take a couple of dogs and go rabbit-hunting. I often caught a good many,

as the dogs would run them into hollow trees, from which I could easily dislodge them by cutting a gap to insert a forked stick. This I twisted into their fur, and drew them out, and then settled them with a blow of the hand across the back of the neck.

I used to do a good deal of trapping also, catching quails, etc., besides martens and weasels, by the creek side in steel traps. Sometimes rabbits got into the quail traps, but after eating the bait they usually got out again, either by scratching away the earth, or by biting through the boards of which the trap was made, much to my disgust.

When out on my excursions I used sometimes to meet a man who lived in a cave in the woods—a trapper. He was a nice-looking fellow, with long black hair, and was clad in buckskin. He was living entirely upon the produce of his traps and rifle, and went about the creeks from place to place as game became scarce in the district he was working. He was a morose sort of man, and although I saw him several times in the woods he never spoke.

As the spring grew on I heard nothing

about returning to the prairie, and so I just continued on at work for the old man on the same terms. I guess he had a good bargain, for I did a man's work without a man's pay. Still I had not much cause to complain, for had I been up on the prairie, I should not have been any better off in that respect, and a good deal worse as regards comfort in living and clothing, for, of course, I had no cooking, or washing and mending, to do at Blake's, as was the case at home.

Miss Blake made me quite a fancy "boiled" shirt for Sundays, etc. It was a blue check calico or something, with three rows of white frills all down the front, and which, owing to the absence of a waistcoat, showed off to fine advantage. The old lady made me some "blue-jeans" pants, so that with a pair of knee boots with red tops I guess I rather took the shine out of my friends at home.

After ploughing the land and getting the crops planted, we had to overhaul the fences, which was no slight job. There was a ring fence enclosing about one hundred and twenty acres, and this had to be put in repair for the summer, and kept proof against the hogs

and cattle that roamed about. It was a zig-zag or snake fence, as is usually built where wood is plentiful. Twelve-foot rails are laid on the ground in a series of wide V shapes, and piled one on another until about eight deep, then stakes are driven in the ground, crossing at the top rail, and then a heavy log or "rider" is thrown into the V formed by the two stakes, which binds it all together. The rider is usually heavy enough to prevent cattle from lifting it off. This forms a good fence, but is dreadfully extravagant with wood. With all this, when the crops grew up we were often bothered by cattle, and more particularly by mules, breaking in, when it was my job to mount a pony, take a big whip, and chase them out with the dogs. Two of the dogs were very useful; they would rush after the mules as they galloped away and bite their fetlocks, and then crouch so low that the mules kicked clean over them; or they would take a cow by the tail or ear, and hang on like grim Death.

After the crops were all planted, there was little for me to do for a couple of months, and so I was sent to school, which was two

miles away. I guess I did not learn much, for I believe that I could have taught the "school-marm" more than she taught me, though I improved myself a bit in spelling, arithmetic, and United States geography.

By this time the Indian corn was pretty high, and had to be "cultivated."

One day, when at work in the fields driving a brush harrow, we had a smart shock of earthquake. It did no damage, however, only making everything tremble a bit, and rattling down some of the crockery in the house. Slight shocks are not infrequent, but I have not heard of any at all severe.

Thunderstorms and high winds are rather prevalent, sometimes accompanied with heavy rains, which cause the creeks to rise many feet above their normal height in a very short time. At all the fords to the creeks are marks cut on the trees, showing the depth of the water, and when it is dangerous to cross. It often happens that a farmer will go to town in the morning crossing a creek perhaps three feet deep, and by evening the water may be twelve or fifteen feet, and he must wait a day or two to get home.

One of our neighbours lost three children at one time in the creek. Four little ones had gone to school in the morning, crossing the stream by stepping-stones, but a heavy rain having fallen, the water rose so much that one of the boys was sent from home to carry them across in the waggon. He passed the creek safely going to them, but on returning the water had risen still further, and the current was so strong that the waggon was overturned, and three of the five children were drowned as well as the two horses. The other two children were washed against some trees, to which they clung until rescued.

As we were near the main road, sometimes we had to entertain travellers who were delayed by the water for a few days, if the rain continued; but the creeks not being very long, they go down as quickly as they rise.

Occasionally the people camped out in the woods, and came to the house for hay, etc. Now and then they stuck in the mud in crossing, and we were awakened in the night to go and lend them a hand with ropes and poles to get them out.

Ague was rather prevalent in the summer

on the creeks, but I never had a fit of the "shakes" myself. It is confined pretty much to the creeks, though occasionally there was a case up on the prairie. I remember once that a neighbour's son was with us when we boys went swimming, and would not go in the water, as his father had told him he would get the ague. This did not deter us; we swam, and did not get the "shakes," while he stopped out and did get them. None of our party ever had them at all; in fact, we were never ill. Occasionally we got a little out of order inside through errors in eating, but were never laid up for a day, and never saw a doctor.

I must except one occasion though, and that was when I was staying down at Blake's. I was troubled by my gums leaving my teeth during the winter. This the doctor told Miss Blake (who was affected in the same way) was caused by so much salt meat and so few vegetables, and was in reality a slight attack of scurvy. With the spring, however, it soon passed away, though it left some of my teeth rather loose.

Pork was our usual food, fresh or frozen in

winter, and smoked or salted in summer, though varied occasionally by our poultry or wild fowl. Beef we did not often have,—we only killed once a year,—and as for mutton—well, in six years I only tasted it twice, and that was off the same sheep, a pet one killed by a neighbour of old Blake's. Sheep are now, however, being raised in Kansas. In hot weather several neighbours sometimes agreed together to take part of a pig killed by one of them, so that there should be no danger of it not keeping.

We kept a bottle of "Pain-killer" in the house, and we also had a demijohn of whisky for medicinal purposes. This was really got as a cure for snake bites, but we never had occasion to use it for that purpose. I knew a man who had been bitten twice by deadly snakes, one a rattlesnake, and the other a copperhead. One he put his hand upon while quarrying rock, and the other he sat upon. He drank lots of whisky and recovered, but it does not always act. My father was once up at Salina, a town some thirty-five miles west of us, and saw a man attempt for a wager to carry a rattlesnake across the street and

back in his bare hand. He succeeded in taking it across, but upon returning it to the box the snake bit him. Whisky was at once procured to any extent, but all in vain. The poison was too strong for him, and in an hour he was a dead man.

As we were never called upon to tap our demijohn for this purpose, we broached it one Christmas Day, and invited our neighbours to help drink it. On one occasion I was a little queer, and my father gave me about half a cupful, neat. It proved rather too strong for me, for shortly afterwards I lay down on my back on a bench, kicked up my heels, and laughed both loud and long, at nothing. I eventually fell asleep, and was put to bed in my clothes. I awoke next morning knowing nothing about it, but I had a splitting headache.

But I must return to Blake's.

There was a man living close to us named Maloy, a "squatter,"—that is, a man who had no land of his own, but had built a shanty on Government land. He was an emigrant from Tennessee, a "poor white," a man that the niggers looked down upon, almost too proud to work, but too poor to do without. He

suffered a great deal from the "shakes," after a fit of which, in a sort of nigger dialect, he would describe himself as feeling "powerful weak." His speech was certainly peculiar; little things were "mighty tiny" or "tremendous small." He lived by working about among the farmers.

On the 4th July we all went to celebrate Independence Day at Council Grove, where a grand picnic was held in the woods. There were the usual oratorical flights, bands of music, parades through the town, and a general display of enthusiasm and Sunday clothes.

Council Grove is situated on the River Neosho, and is said to take its name from a patch of timber, where, before the land was settled, five men stopped on their travels, and held a council as to the advisability of going further west. Three decided to keep on through the Indian country, and were killed, while the other two returned in safety to the settlements. It is also said that the Indians held their councils in the same grove. It is now a large thriving town, with flour and saw mills, schools, newspapers, and churches.

I used often to go fishing in the creek, which was well stocked with sun-fish, black bass, suckers, cat-fish, etc. There were also plenty of turtles, and some big gar-fish, a great ugly fish something like a pike, but not good for eating.

As all the creek land had been settled for several years, "varmint" was not so common as up on the prairie, but sometimes we came across snakes, etc. One day I was ploughing, and took the top off a hole where lay a big bull snake. I saw him just in time, and swung on the plough handles to lift my feet clear, and was dragged by. Then I stopped the horses, and went back and killed the vile thing.

Another day Miss Blake and I were out in the woods gathering wild gooseberries, when she had a narrow escape of being bitten. A black snake was coiled up in a bush, and she only just saw it in time to jump back as it sprang. She called out to me, and I then rushed up and killed it.

We used to get a good deal of wild fruit here of various kinds; living near the woods. Blackberries and wild grapes abounded, in particular.

Old Blake had some queer notions in his head, and one of these was, that to bring up dogs to be of any use, they must be severely treated and very sparingly fed to make them hardy. We had a couple of nice young pups, and the old man determined to put his theory into practice, so no one was allowed to feed them but himself. They grew up by degrees very lean and thin, and at last got so ferocious that they began to kill and eat the chickens. The old man would not believe it when told, until at last one day, when he was chopping wood, he saw them run down a fowl and tear it to pieces, and this, despite all his cries to them to stop.

This so enraged him, that he rushed after them and caught first one and then the other, and took them to the wood pile and cut off both their heads with his axe.

During my stay here we had a "camp-meeting" and religious revival up the creek. It was held in the woods beside the stream, and lasted for a week. All the people in the neighbourhood who were members of the Church flocked to the meeting, during which there were open-air sermons, baptisms, prayer-

meetings, and psalm-singing, and a general reclamation of backsliders. The crusade was headed by the Methodists, and it is of periodical occurrence. At the different meetings there was a row of seats in front for "mourners,"—that is, those mourning for their sins and wishing to join the Church; and here a number of people got very excited, and there was a lot of weeping and shouting when a mourner "found glory."

Once or twice during each day, according to the number of converts, they waded into the creek, and amid shouts of "glory" were baptized. Lots of people went to the meetings who were not members of any Church, and the whole thing partook very much of the nature of a week's picnic. There was plenty to eat and drink, and considerable amusement was to be found by the not too serious part of the community.

It seems rather a peculiar notion for parsons and elders of the Church to spend their time travelling about the country in waggons and camping out in the woods for weeks together, but it is frequently done over here.

When the revivalists had departed and the excitement had abated a bit, the new members slacked down to their former level, and but little effect remained in a short time of the enthusiastic revival.

CHAPTER VII.

GRASSHOPPERS, ETC.

Arrival of the pest.—Attempted precautions.—Their fearlessness.—How the corn vanished.—The orchard stripped.—Down the well.—Their departure.—Their multitude.—The lost cow.—Indians.—The Indian's grave.

It was during this year that Kansas was visited with the dreadful plague of grasshoppers, or, as they are perhaps more correctly called, locusts, for there is no doubt but that they were closely allied to the locust of the Bible. They are said to breed away up in the Rocky Mountains of the north-west, and when they have increased to such an extent that the grass is all eaten up, then they descend upon the fertile prairies, and clear everything away as they go. This has happened twice since the settlement of the country. They travel mostly in a south-easterly direction, and are supposed to perish in the Gulf of Mexico. They move

but slowly, but in such myriads that the farmers are powerless against them.

About a fortnight before they arrived with us, we heard that they were at Junction City, so that it took them fourteen days to travel about thirty-five miles. It was at the beginning of August, and the small grains, such as wheat, etc., were carried and stacked, so that these were secure. The maize, however, was as yet far from ripe, though the ears were well formed. We cut a lot of it, and shocked it to make fodder for the cattle, but it was destroyed with the other, after the beastly things arrived. They came on gradually like a fall of snow. We first saw a glittering cloud high in the sky, and all sparkling in the sun, from which they fell one or two at a time. At first they came down so slowly that the fowls could clear them up, but presently they began to fall in earnest, and then nothing could check them.

They alighted on houses, people, animals, fences, crops, covering everything, while the ground was strewn several inches thick, so that it was impossible to walk about without killing dozens at each step, while it was a hard job to keep them brushed off hands and face.

They seemed to have no fear, but alighted on anything. They continued falling for several days, so that they did not decrease in any way. No matter how many were killed, there were hundreds to take the place of one.

They began on the green corn and garden crops, and made a clean sweep. In the morning the corn was waving in all its beauty—and it is about the loveliest crop that grows—a splendid green, and so high and dense that a man riding through it on horseback would not be seen; in the evening nothing remained but the bare, upright stalks, which were rapidly blackening under the influence of their bites, and through which one could see all over the field. Flowers, leaves, silk, ears, all had vanished down their rapacious maws. They cleared off all the apples, peaches, and grapes, of which fruits we had a splendid show; but not a single one of either escaped.

We could walk through the orchard and see perhaps twenty grasshoppers at one apple, drilling right through and through. Presently it would fall to the ground, and amongst the struggling mass there it soon totally disappeared. They left a few things at first which

did not quite taste apparently to their satisfaction. These were the haulm of the potato, the tomato, the sugar-cane or sorghum, and tobacco. But these were all eventually cleared up after every other green leaf had disappeared.

All the trees in the woods were divested of their leaves, and the whole place looked as though there had been a fire raging in every part. One of my daily jobs was to climb down the well to clear the hoppers out to keep them from polluting the water. The windlass was not strong enough to carry me, and so I had to go down without my boots on, and hang on with fingers and toes in the crevices of the stones with which the well was walled. I would then take a small dipper or gourd, and skim all the hoppers into the bucket, which was drawn up and emptied by some one at the top. It was perhaps a little dangerous, but the well was only forty-five feet deep, so that I could not fall farther than that, unless I knocked the bottom out. One of our neighbour's sons was suffocated while on a similar job, the well being full of foul gas. Ours was quite free from this, however. It was awfully cold down at the bottom on a hot summer's

day; to feel the sudden change from hot to cold was very queer. I wonder somewhat that it did not give me a bad cold, but I think that this rough out-of-door life kept us very healthy and hardy.

I remember my brother Jack was once riding across a creek on the ice with a pair of horses, when it gave way, and all disappeared beneath the water. After a bit of a struggle Jack managed to get out, and also to save the horses. The latter were so cold and exhausted that they lay down on the ground unable to stir, and so we covered them up with straw for the night, after giving them a good feed; Jack's clothes were frozen as hard as boards, so that he could hardly walk, but his cold bath did not in the least interfere with his health; he did not catch even a slight cold.

After the grasshoppers had finished every green thing, including chewing the tobacco, they began to seek "fresh fields and pastures new," and gradually departed, having remained about a month; during the latter part of which they had been on starvation fare, eating twigs and bark, and varying their diet with such of their number as were injured and could not

defend themselves. When, the main body went, however, they still left swarms behind, who were engaged in laying eggs in the earth ready to be hatched in the sun next spring, so that we had trouble to look forward to, as well as to lament the present.

The fowls and ducks were quite bewildered by their bounteous provision, and thrived and fattened wonderfully—the only things that did during the hoppers' destructive visit. It was enough to make a man's heart ache to stand and see every bit of vegetation destroyed as it was, and at the same time to be utterly powerless to prevent it. All sorts of experiments were tried, but in vain. Fire, of course, destroyed them, but we could not have fire everywhere, among the trees and growing crops. There was nothing to be done but grin and bear it.

The bulk of the army, after leaving us, travelled on right across the State of Kansas, part of Missouri, and Arkansas, and even reached into Texas; but by that time frost had set in, and I suppose that in search of a warmer climate they took a long flight, and they are said to have been lost—to sight, but not to

memory dear—in the sea, in the Gulf of Mexico. Their numbers were something awful to contemplate. Some little idea of them may be formed when I say that there was a band at least two hundred and fifty miles wide, extending quite across the State, and about twenty miles deep from vanguard to rear, an ever-shifting mass, gradually moving on; and when I say that the majority of this belt of land—five thousand square miles—was so covered that each footstep killed dozens,—though of course they congregated mostly about the cultivated fields,—enough will have been said to show the utter impossibility of in any way destroying them.

After they had left us the weather kept remarkably warm, and all the trees, after having their leaves stripped by the hoppers, began to sprout again, and the apple and peach trees presented the peculiar sight of being covered with blossom in November. But of course they were soon stripped again by the frosts.

This winter was a hard one, for so many people had lost nearly everything by the hoppers, such as had very little land in small grain, and for prairie farmers who had no

wood to cut and sell. I continued on with old Zedekiah, chopping wood nearly all winter, and looking after the cattle, a number of which he was again wintering. We were rather unfortunate with the cattle, they used to get stuck in the mud so much. It was a fearful job to get them out sometimes, wading in mud and water up to one's waist to hitch a rope round their horns. Then when rescued they did not always recover, but were so perished with the cold and wet that they succumbed despite all our efforts to keep them alive with pails of warm bran mash, boiled potatoes, and boiled corn.

At one time we lost a cow for four days. She went out one morning with the others, but failed to turn up at night to be fed. They were not housed at all, but spent the night in the woods, where it was warmer than in the corral. Well, the next morning came, and as she was still missing, I got on a pony and started to hunt for her. It was almost a matter of certainty that she was stuck somewhere, but where? That was the question. I rode carefully up and down the creek for miles both sides to give no chance away, inspecting every

branch of the creek, and travelling far beyond their usual feeding-ground, but all in vain.

The next day Miss Blake started off as well as myself in a different direction, and kept up the search all day, but evening came, and the cow was still gone. The third day the old man joined in the hunt, but we were again unsuccessful, though we found another cow that had got stuck that day. On the evening of the fourth day I was riding home rather dejected at our ill luck, and was in sight of the house, when, passing by a little bit of a pond in a hollow of the hills, I thought that I detected in the long grass something more solid than reeds or bushes. I rode up closer, and to my infinite surprise and joy found the lost cow. She was so deep in the mud that only her head remained exposed to view, and one might have passed within a few feet without seeing her.

I could scarce believe my eyes upon finding her actually within sight of the house after our most diligent search. Didn't I gallop home in a hurry for a team to pull her out! It was a terrible job, and we almost expected to pull her horns off or break her neck, so deeply mired was she. But at last we got her

out and fed her with a pail of hot mash, and rubbed her down with dry hay, and then covered her up for the night, for, of course, she was quite unable to stand. She lingered a few days, and then died, the cold and exposure having proved too much for her.

Old Zedekiah gave me a dollar for finding her, which he had offered before as a reward. That was all the money I ever received from him during my stay of fourteen months. But I think that cash was always rather a scarce article with him. He and I together did all the work of a one-hundred-and-sixty-acre farm, scarcely hiring a man for a day, except in harvest time; and as old Zedekiah was over sixty and a little shrivelled-up man, you may guess that I had plenty of hard work to get through. I ran the mowing-machine and the horse-rake, during the haying season—besides loading and stacking all the hay while the old man pitched,—and the reaping-machine in harvest.

A lot of our haying was done at night by the light of the moon, owing to the prevalence of high winds during the day time, which made it impossible to load or stack. This was a little risky, as in carrying hay snakes are

sometimes thrown up with the hay-cock, and in the semi-darkness this is not a pleasant experience.

Other heavy work I did my share in equal with the old man, such as ploughing, etc., as we had two teams; so he ploughed with one and I with the other. I was rather fond of this work when the ground was not too heavy, and used to take a pride in getting a furrow as straight as possible.

In setting out a piece of land to plough, one fastens two or three stakes in the ground in a straight line across the field, and then drives right at them with eyes fixed and scarcely troubling about the depth or evenness of the furrow, so long as it is straight. Then the horses are turned sharp round and driven back, the plough throwing the next furrow on top of the first one. This forms a "ridge furrow."

Sometimes ploughing is started from the outside edge of a piece of ground, and carried round and round until none remains to be done. This forms a "dead furrow," almost a little ditch in the centre of the piece.

We were annoyed a good deal by the begging and stealing of the Indians down here. A

few miles south of Council Grove there was a reservation, a large piece of land several miles square, left entirely for the Indians, and upon which no white man had a right to set foot. Here they lived in their primitive style, hunting, fishing, and trapping, despite all the efforts of the Government to civilise them. Several nice stone houses had been built for them with this aim, but, after trying them, the Indians went back to their wretched wigwams, and used the houses to stable their miserable little ponies in the winter.

Although the whites were not allowed on their land, the Indians still had the right of hunting as they thought fit all over the country, and as a result of this practice, one day one of our pigs came rushing in from the woods with an arrow through its body.

They have since been moved some two hundred miles further west, and the reservation opened up for settlement.

One day I found an Indian's grave, and obtained a lot of relics, which had been buried with him for his use in the happy hunting grounds. There were a pair of bullet moulds, a brass thimble, several arrow-heads, and

various other small articles. I think, though, that someone else had been there before me, as the bones were very disordered, and I did not see the skull at all. The grave was on the top of a high bluff, whence lovely views of the Neosho Valley were obtained.

CHAPTER VIII.

BACK TO THE PRAIRIE.

A split in the camp.—Early rising.—The county treasurer.—
Living in a dug-out.—The Grasshopper Relief Fund.—
The old home again.—The sick cow.—The disappearance
of the Quinns.—A rifle accident.—Building a school-
house.—Road-making.—How the land is divided.

AFTER working for old Zedekiah for the time mentioned, viz., fourteen months, I had a little flare-up with the old man and left him. I don't know whether he had anything upon his mind, so that he could not sleep, but he had contracted the habit of rising at three o'clock every day, summer or winter, and I had to do the same. In the winter the fire was kept alight all night on the big stone hearth covered up with ashes, and it was an easy job for him to jump out of bed and start it blazing again. But for me up in my loft, getting up was a harder matter, and with the snow drifting

through the chinks, the sensation was not tropical. Still, I had to crawl out, and then feed, water, clean, and harness the horses, though why this should be done at three o'clock in the morning I never could make out. This work took me an hour or more, after which I was at liberty to go in the house and sit by the big log fire with the old man till breakfast at seven, burning, as Josh Billings would say, a pound of wood and a cord of candles.

After breakfast Miss Blake and I milked the cows, and fed the pigs and poultry, turkeys, geese, etc., by which time it was daylight, and we could begin our regular work, wood-hauling, or whatever it might be.

Well, one fearfully cold morning I did all my work as usual,—except the watering of the horses, which I never troubled myself about now, as they would not drink so early in the morning,—and then returned to the house. After a while the old man asked me if I had watered the horses. I told him I had not, as they never drank so early.

“Well, have you tried?”

“No,” said I, “not this morning; but I

have dozens of times; I always water them now when they go to work."

"But, confound it! I want them to have water the first thing."

"But they won't drink."

"Well, make them. Go out at once and water them."

"It's no use," said I.

"Will you do as I tell you?"

"Anything in reason."

Then the old gent thoroughly lost his temper and let loose, reviling me up and down, and complaining of my ingratitude for his kindness in feeding and clothing me for such a long time. When I got a chance to put a word in edgeways, I said, "Well, if you are tired of keeping me, I guess I am tired of being kept, so we had better part."

Great grounds he had to complain, I am sure; I was doing a man's work for less than a boy's pay, and I had refused an offer in the spring to go and herd cattle on the Blue River at ten dollars a month, preferring to work away with the old man.

After the talk with him I had some breakfast, and then packed up all my belongings,

which made but a very small bundle, said "good-bye," and started off to walk twenty miles to Parkersville, where I thought I might get a lift up near our prairie home.

I left with some regret; for, despite the old man's peculiarities and the amount of work required of me, I had spent some very pleasant days on Monkres Creek. I left behind me a barrel of walnuts, which I had gathered in the woods, and which I was going to sell. I also had to go without saying "good-bye" to Miss Blake, who was away for a few days. I was sorry for this, as we were very good friends.

She was engaged to a young farmer, and I afterwards heard that she was married shortly after I left. It was rather a wonder that she had not been married before, living in a country where fifteen or sixteen is quite an ordinary marriageable age, and as she was an only child, and would come in for a very good farm and a lot of stock. I believe she had received several offers, however. One evening, while I was there, a young man rode over from a neighbouring creek, and popped the question while she was milking the cows.

He was rather far gone, I guess, and, upon her refusal, he pulled out a revolver and threatened to shoot himself, and she told him to blaze away. He did not do it though, but changed his mind, and, mounting his horse, rode away. He occupied a very good position, being the county treasurer; but I guess it was a fortunate escape for her, for he married some one else soon afterwards, and then deserted her and fled the country with 30,000 dollars of the public money.

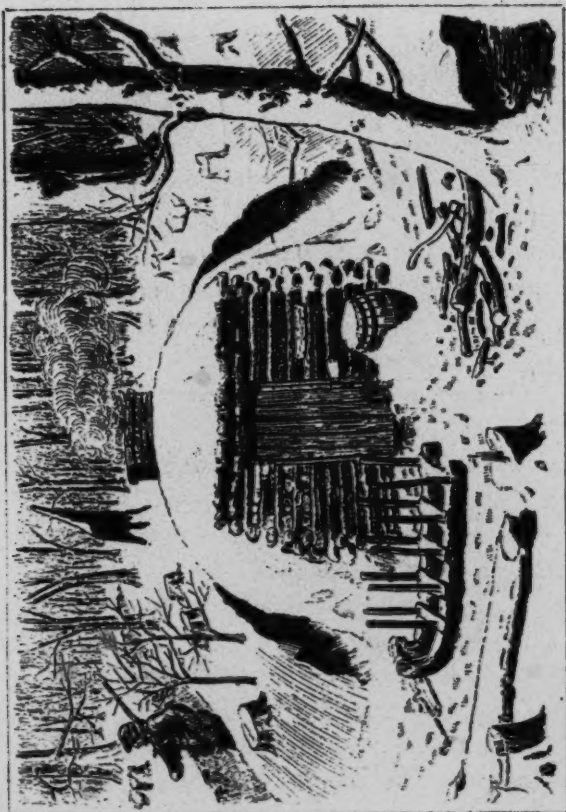
After leaving the old man, I struck out for Parkersville, which thriving town I reached in good time without adventure of any sort. Immediately upon my arrival I made for the drug store.

When I began to make inquiries as to whether any of my people or neighbours were in town, I heard that my father and brother were living down in the timber, chopping wood and hauling it to town for sale. I was glad to hear this, for it saved me a seven-mile walk beyond the twenty I had already done, and I was mighty hungry. I soon found my way to our timber patch, and I guess I rather took my people by surprise, for, of course, they

were not expecting to see me. I found them living in a dug-out, a nice warm crib, but only just about big enough for two people, and rather uncomfortably crowded with the addition of my presence. Still, we stopped here for a month or more, working away at the wood-chopping.

It was very fortunate for us that we had this timber land to fall back upon, as it was the only thing we had to keep us going during the winter, after losing nearly everything by the grasshoppers.

There was much distress all over the State, and a fund was organised, called the "Grasshopper Fund," to relieve the destitute people. Contributions were sent in in great numbers and from every State in the Union, consisting of money, food, and clothes. These were sent into large head quarters at Topeka, the State capital, and then distributed to different branches for redistribution among the suffering farmers. Of course, numbers of the settlers were new comers who were dependent entirely upon their crops for a living, having no capital to fall back upon, so that a bad year meant literal starvation. Therefore, in



OUR DUG-OUT IN THE WOODS.

[To face page 144.]

that respect, we were better off than many of our neighbours; still, we were glad to accept some of the relief. We got a coat each and some boots, and from time to time some flour and haricot beans, etc.

After living down here in the woods for a few weeks, we all moved up to our old prairie farm again, where Humphrey was living alone. I found the old place looking just the same after my absence of more than a year, and was glad to see the familiar cattle and horses again.

By this time the winter was nearly over, and we could set to work again with our ploughing ready for the spring crops. We had great fears concerning the grasshoppers when they should be hatched, but fortunately they did not live to do much damage. We had a few hot days early in the spring, which hatched them out in myriads, but they were succeeded by some frosts which killed the majority. If it had not been for that, the probability is that every green thing would have been destroyed, for their numbers were so great that the ground was alive with them, though at first only about the size of fleas. As it was, they did considerable damage to the winter wheat.

Upon my return from Blake's, I found our best cow, or at least the one that had cost us most money, in a very bad way. She had been stuck in the mud, and was now so weak that she could not stand. She had been lying down so long that her skin was worn through in some places, and so now they had hung her to the roof of the rough temporary shed which had been erected for her, near where she had been stuck. It was close against a steep bank, which protected her from the north wind. She was suspended by sacks round her body, held up by ropes that just allowed her feet to touch the ground, though they did not take much weight. She was fearfully weak though, and after keeping her alive for some weeks by feeding her up well, she died at last as she stood.

Shortly after returning I heard that the Quinn family had left the neighbourhood. The old lady and all the children cleared out during the night, driving away with a pair of horses and a waggon, and leaving the old man behind. Two or three days after the team and waggon were returned, but nothing was ever heard of the family of eleven children and their

mother. It was a most remarkable disappearance. I know that the old people did not agree at all well, and the children all took the mother's side, but I certainly never expected that they would decamp *en masse*.

One day I was alone in the house with Humphrey, and came very near putting a bullet through him by accident. He was looking at one of my father's rifles, a long Enfield, which he thought was empty, and presently asked me if I could hold it out in position. "Yes, I guess I can; let's see!" said I. I tried and aimed it at him.

"Don't point it at me. Aim out of the window. Yes, that's all right. Now, let's see you cock it and pull the trigger. There is an old cap on, it won't hurt the nipple."

I pointed it out of the window, and pulled the trigger, when—bang!—there was a tremendous explosion, a smashing of glass and wood-work, and I was kicked by the recoil half across the room. The gun was not only loaded, but the muzzle was plugged up to keep out the damp. I wonder that the barrel did not burst and kill one or both of us. The plug was of cork with a brass top to it, and this was

blown to atoms. The bullet went through the window sash frame, and the pieces of the brass smashed five panes of glass, and several were also found embedded in the wall on either side of the window and in a clock case near by. Humphrey was struck in the forehead with a piece of cork, and was very fortunate in getting nothing worse, as he was sitting near the window. It was a narrow escape for him; for, if he had not called out, I should certainly have pulled the trigger while aiming at him, and then nothing could have saved him.

This only shows again the danger of playing with fire-arms. Of course, we thought the gun empty, but evidently it had been loaded, probably by my father, when neither of us was by.

My father was a splendid shot with a rifle. I saw him once shoot at a prairie hen standing on top of a shed one hundred and fifty yards away, and cut its head off with the bullet.

During this winter the farmers set to work amongst themselves to build a school-house. A site was selected, and all set to work with a will. One or two quarried the rock, others hauled it to the spot, some of the Swedish

fraternity dressed the stone into shape, while others dug foundations, prepared the joists, and hauled the lime and sand for the mortar. I went with Samaurez to Council Grove to get lime, and on our return journey we nearly lost it and the waggon also, for we had a heavy shower of rain which might have slacked the lime and set fire to the whole lot.

We passed a waggon on our way back which had taken fire from this cause, and was being rapidly destroyed, the farmer standing by powerless. Fortunately, we had plenty of coverings with us, and by taking off our coats, too, we managed to keep the rain off the lime.

The house was completed during the winter, and opened shortly afterwards; but I never got a chance to go, as I left home about the same time.

It is a very good system in a new country where cash is scarce, that of all hands combining together to do a job of this kind, as the work is done sharply; and as all the men know each other, it is quite a friendly gathering. The roads were made in the same manner, the farmers assembling and bringing teams, ploughs, scrapers, and other tools, and

setting to work under an overseer appointed by themselves. In this way hills are levelled, gullies filled up or bridged across with culverts, swampy places made sound, and a good road to town thus completed in a short time. The roads are supposed to be made around each square mile, but at present the settlers only make those that are really necessary to travel on, though anyone planting a hedge puts it a certain distance within his line, so that there is a strip of land on the outer edge of the section to be made good as opportunity arrives.

As I have before observed, the country is divided into square miles,—six hundred and forty acres; and it is proposed that around each of these, in course of time, there shall be a good road forty feet wide. This, when carried into effect with a good hedge on either side, will be a remarkable feature in the country.

This spirit of co-operation is practised even to the boarding of the school-teachers, or "school-marms," engaged at the school-house when built; he or she is "boarded around" amongst the neighbours week by week.

The State is divided up in the following way by the government survey. There is a line through the middle, running north and south, and another, running east and west; and starting from here all the land is divided by straight lines into patches six miles square. Counting north and south the squares are called townships, and counting east and west they are called ranges. These squares are again divided into square miles, of course, thirty-six to a six-mile square. The square miles or sections, as they are called, are again divided as may be required by the settler.

The description of my father's land in the government title was as follows:—The west half of the south-east quarter of section four, township fourteen, range seven east. This would show its position at once on the map, irrespective of the county it was in, or of the position it occupied at the head of a creek. One would know that it was forty-two miles east of the centre, and eighty-four miles to the north.

The annexed diagram represents the township, and shows section four subdivided as it was.

Parker and Humphrey had the north-east quarter; Will Hopkins and my father the south-east quarter; Walter Woods the piece parallel to my father's, on the west; and the

	1	2	3	N	4	5	6	
	R	H	R			R	H	
	7	8	9	10	11	12		
	H	R	H	R	H	R		
	13	14	15	16	17	18		
	R	SCHOOL LAND.	R	H	R	H		
W	19	20	21	22	23	24		E
	H	R	H	R	H	R		
	25	26	27	28	29	30		
	R	H	R	H	R	H		
	31	32	33	34	35	36		
	H	R	H	R	H	R		
				S				

R signifies railroad land.

H signifies land available for home-steading.

X shows the land occupied by us.

Township 14; or Range 7, east. (How the land is divided.)

other parts were not settled, as the land was rocky and much broken up.

We were almost half-way between New York and San Francisco, as close to Fort Riley there stands a monument over the grave of an

officer, which is in the exact geographical centre of the United States.

The land is not all available for homesteading, because for a distance of twenty miles on each side of the railway every alternate square mile belongs to the railway company. This mass of land—practically a strip of twenty miles wide and the length of the track—is given by the Government for opening up the country, and a fine reward it is too. It is by this time pretty well sold up, though when we first settled, it was all quite open, and formed good grazing land for our cattle. Beyond the twenty miles all the land was open for settlement upon payment of the small homestead fee, and here the amount of land one could take in this way was one hundred and sixty acres,—just double the size of a homestead within twenty miles of a railway.

Besides this, all over the State, there was one section in every township—that is, one out of every thirty-six square miles put aside for school purposes; its proceeds, when sold, going to the improvement of school-houses, or the payment of the "marms."

CHAPTER IX.

MORE HERDING.

Another engagement.—The Cromptons.—Helping on the farm.—A fog.—Strayed horses.—Lost heifer.—Clearing Wilkinson's melon patch.—Snakes.—The wild bees' nest. Mud-daubers.—The quarrel.—Bad weather.—My pony wears out.

As the weather grew warm we had to think about our cattle again. Last year, while I was at Blake's, the cattle, which had dwindled down in number from various causes, were sent out to herd; but, as I was back again, we thought to get together a herd as before. I could scarcely get enough though to make it pay, and so hearing of a man, some few miles from home, who was in want of a herder, I went to offer my services, and we soon came to terms. He was to pay me eight dollars a month and board and lodging; but as our cattle were to be herded also, there was to be a reduction

of three and a half dollars a month, leaving me four and a half.

This arrangement was for six months, from the 4th of May to the 4th of November. On the first named date Jack and I drove our cattle over to the head of Wilson Creek, where lived the Cromptons,—the people for whom I was going to work. Having found the herd, I bade Jack "good-bye" for six months, and he rode away, leading the pony I had ridden over on, while I took over the charge of the herd. The cattle soon became acquainted with one another, and in a few hours were feeding quietly together, until by-and-bye evening came on, and I drove them home to the corral for the night, when I was introduced to the Crompton family. I had not as yet seen the house or any of its inmates but Steve Crompton, the eldest son, whom I had met out on the prairie, and we had made arrangements then and there.

I found that the family consisted of Mrs. Crompton, a very old lady, a nice motherly sort; Steve and his wife; John, another son; and a daughter, Kate. They were very nice agreeable people, and I got along first rate

with them. They had a large farm, as the old lady, being the head of a family, had taken a piece of land, and the two sons, being of age, each had land as well.

They had a comfortable home and a good many horses and cattle, and I had a very good pony for herding, which Steve had bought expressly. Poor old Charlie! I guess that he had rather a rough time of it, as sometimes the cattle were rather troublesome, as will be seen later on.

We were living just on the boundary of two counties, Morris and Davis. In the latter there was no herd-law, and in the summer, when the grass was good, I could sometimes drive the cattle over the border and leave them for several hours. I was then able to help the Cromptons at work on the farm. During the harvest I loaded all the wheat, and stacked most of it. Harvest comes very early out there, in the latter part of June or the beginning of July, much earlier than in England, whereas haying is just the reverse, coming as late as September. This is, of course, wild prairie hay. Anyone just takes his mowing-machine out, and cuts away as much as he

likes, wherever the grass is good enough. It makes splendid hay if it is got in dry.

I had plenty of work all the time I was living here, up at four o'clock to hunt for the horses, who were turned loose at night over the border. They never came to the fields. I used to go on foot for my pony, who was turned loose too, and always went barefooted, for the grass being high and usually smothered with dew, a pair of boots would be wet through in no time. As it was, with my canvas overalls rolled up as high as they would go, they were frequently wringing wet before I got home. One of the horses had a rope dragging, so that I could catch him, and mounting drive the others in.

One morning I had found them, and was crossing a ravine on the way home, when I came into a thick fog. It was so dense that, although knowing the lay of the country pretty well, I could not find my way at all, and for two hours I wandered about in almost absolute darkness. Of course, the horses were not anxious to get home, or they would doubtless have been able to find their way. At last I got on the top of a hill where the fog was not

quite so thick, and was able to take my bearings.

Fogs are very scarce indeed out there, I think I can hardly remember another; occasionally there was a little mist early in the morning, but the rising sun soon dispelled it.

One morning I started out as usual to find the horses at four o'clock, but after visiting all their usual feeding-places, and tramping about through the wet grass for three hours, I could not find them, and returned to the house. I had some breakfast, and then went to a neighbour and borrowed a pony, while Steve let the cattle out of the corral, and drove them into Davis County, where they could do no damage. Having a mount I did not care so much, and I started along the edge of all the fields anywhere near the county line to try if they had got into the corn anyhow. I could find no signs of them, however, until presently I struck their trail about three miles from home, and found that they had passed through the little town of Skiddy, and had crossed Clark's Creek. I followed them up for a time, until I at last came in sight of them seven miles away, and still travelling from home. I cannot under-

stand what possessed them to stray off in this way; they must have got a fright somehow. I had my stock-whip with me, and didn't I bring them home at a fine rate! I arrived back at the farm with them at twelve o'clock. Ever after that my herding pony was picketed out at night, so as to avoid a repetition of such pranks.

One day, when I left the cattle for a few hours as I often did, to work on the farm, I lost a heifer. Perhaps a little before noon, when the cattle had eaten their fill, and were ready to lie down and chew the cud, I used to drive them up within sight of the house, round them up a little, and wait for a short time, until presently every one of them would be lying down half asleep. Then I could ride to the house, get my dinner, and work away until the cattle got up and roamed away out of sight over the hill, when I had to mount my pony and start after them, and stop with them until the evening.

Well! on this occasion I rounded them up and counted them, and found them all right; but, on returning to them in the afternoon, I found them in rather a wild excited state, and

discovered that there was a heifer missing, as well as a young stray steer that did not belong to the herd, but which had taken to it and fed with it for several weeks. Of course, from time to time as I could leave the cattle for a little while, I hunted around in all the little hollows and likely places, but could not find her, and so took the herd home without her. The next day John Crompton tended the herd while I spent all my time in searching high and low for the missing heifer, but all to no purpose. We had been able to find out to whom the stray steer belonged, and now came to the conclusion that its owners had been after it, and possibly taken our heifer along for some reason or other.

The next day Steve and I rode over to the owner, who lived ten miles away, to see if we could get any information. We found their herd and the steer with it, but no signs of the heifer, and as their house was empty, they being but two bachelors, we were unable to gain any tidings here. On our way back, hardly knowing what to do next, when passing through my usual herding-ground, we found the poor thing, lying down in the long grass

in a slight hollow, with a broken leg. It was evident that while cutting out the stray steer, they had run the cattle about over the rocks a good deal, which accounted for their being so excited when I found them that afternoon, and the heifer had been injured in this way. Still, as we could not prove anything, we had to let the matter drop, and the heifer was killed. The loss fell upon the owner, as Steve did not guarantee the well-being of cattle which he undertook to herd. Of course, there was no blame attached to me, as I was absent from the herd at the time, according to instructions, but I did not half like losing the animal. It had the effect of keeping me entirely with the herd afterwards.

We had very few neighbours about us. A few miles down the creek, in Davis County, there lived an old man named Wilson, who had been there very many years, in fact, so long that the creek was named after him. He was pretty well off, had a fine herd of cattle and several good horses, and, of course, having been the first settler, he had picked out the best farm in the neighbourhood. He was an old bachelor, and lived in a little log hut in

a very primitive manner, and alone, save for a boy about a year or two older than myself, who looked after his cattle. He was not exactly a herder, as there was no herd-law, but, having a number of cattle, he had to look them up every day to see that they did not stray into the next county. He was not a nice youth, for though often meeting him on the prairie, he seldom spoke. I guess he was rather proud, for he used to come out sometimes in a collar and a blue necktie,—articles rarely sported on the prairie. (I remember once my brother Jack was going to have his photograph taken, and for the life of us among the four we could not find a collar. He was taken with a tie on though, one that my father had brought from England.) He was always well dressed, and rode a splendid pony, while I had only canvas overalls and a couple of hickory shirts, which were worn right along for months.

Although living very comfortably with the Cromptons, money was mighty scarce; I received no advance, and once kept a letter for two months for want of a five-cent stamp, and was then ashamed to send it to an old

school-fellow back in England for whom it was intended.

Another neighbour was an Englishman, named Wilkinson. He had been a window-dresser in a hosier's shop on Ludgate Hill. Rather a change for him, this quiet country life and farming, after the noise and bustle of London. He had not got thoroughly Americanised when I knew him, and was rather conservative on some points. For instance, he threatened to shoot anybody who dared take a melon out of his patch without his permission. It is quite a regular thing here for a traveller to enter a field or an orchard and help himself to a water melon or a peach or apple, and being universally allowed it falls no harder on one than another. Any man that disapproved was quite at liberty to help himself when out travelling, when he would find a nice ripe melon very acceptable. It cannot be called stealing, for all is done openly; it is simply a neighbourly action. Still Mr. Wilkinson did not like the practice, and in our hearing threatened dire punishment on any one who should rob his fruit. John Crompton and I resolved to give him a lesson.

One dark night, when there was no moon, we took a couple of horses and two big sacks, and rode over near to his farm. We left the horses in a hollow, out of sight of his house, and then taking the sacks, crawled on hands and knees through the long grass and into his melon patch. We cut a good many and ate the best parts, leaving the remainder so that he could see that someone had been enjoying themselves, and then filled our sacks with the finest in the patch. We rolled them down the ravine to where we had left our horses, threw them across their backs, and went home, without even having disturbed old Wilkinson's dogs. We covered up the melons in the stable with a lot of hay in case he should come around, which he did the next day, complaining bitterly; but I don't think he had any suspicion as to who the culprits were. It was perhaps rather rough on him, but if the stupid man had but borne the loss of an occasional melon in a neighbourly manner, we should not have cleared his patch for him.

The farmers, as a rule, are very hospitable, and one could ride across country hunting up stray cattle or horses for days together,

without being asked to pay for his board and night's lodging, or for his horse's provender. Of course, a man usually offered something, but the almost invariable reply was, "Oh! that's all right, stranger, just you do the same for me when I'm in your parts!" Where a house was near a main road, running from town to town, such for instance as old Blake's on Monkres Creek, one was bound to make some charge for accommodation.

There being but few settlers in Crompton's neighbourhood, snakes were pretty plentiful, and I used to kill lots of them when out on the prairie with the herd. One day I had a big battle with a bull snake, about the largest I had seen. After I had killed him, I held him up by the tail, and reaching as high as I could, could scarcely get his head off the ground. I settled him with my whip, which made a fine weapon for the purpose. It was a regular stock whip, with a short stout handle about a foot long, loaded at the end with lead, and had a lash fifteen feet long, made of plaited raw hide, round and tapering like a snake. It was enough to damp the ardour of any "rampagious" bullock, as when properly



1.—A BATTLE WITH A BULL SNAKE.



2.—VICTORY. "HOW LONG IS HE?"

handled it would pop like a pistol, and draw blood every time. Sometimes I found snakes in such positions that I could not kill them. I was riding through the brushwood one day, when I saw a nest of five copperheads, all in a heap, but the trees were so thick that I could not swing my whip, and as there were no rocks near at hand I was reluctantly obliged to pass on.

Early one morning I had a high time with a wild bees' nest. It was about half a mile from the house, and I had determined to take it for the honey. This is how I set to work. The nest was a hole in the ground out on the open prairie, an old burrow of some animal; and I went just before daybreak with two small flat sticks of wood, and began to thump on the ground to wake them up. I heard a big buzzing and humming, and then two or three crawled slowly out to see what was the matter. They came out gaping and rubbing their eyes, but before they discovered the cause of their being awakened so early, I had smashed them between my two sticks.

They continued coming up, and rather more quickly, but I managed them all right by

covering the hole with one stick, and just letting them out one at a time to be killed with the other. Things were going on nicely for me, not for the bees,—when, to my alarm, I saw that there was another exit,—a back-door to their residence—quite beyond my reach, and from there they began to fly out in great numbers, for by this time they were wide awake, and angry at being disturbed; there was quite a roar in the nest. Immediately I saw this I knew that I must give up the job, so I took to my heels, and ran about a quarter of a mile, and then dropping to a walk was just congratulating myself on my lucky escape, when—buzz! like a bullet a bee was down on me. He lit on the back of my neck, gave a sting, and then slid down my back under my shirt, and began again; but I soon grabbed him and smashed him in my fingers. He was alone fortunately, but I had quite enough from him, and serve me right, too, some will say, for trying to rob their nest.

These bees are not like the regular honey bee, but large things, more like the humble bee, and capable, like the wasp, of stinging repeatedly. They build almost entirely in

holes in the earth. Wasps are plentiful, also another insect, very similar, but black, and termed "mud-daubers," from their practice of building nests of mud all over the place, indoors or under the eaves like swallows:

The nests are very peculiar in construction, and contain inside, in a semi-torpid state, numbers of little spiders, which serve as food for the young when hatched.

One morning I found that one of the work horses was very ill, and had much difficulty in getting him home to the house, where he died almost immediately. He was suffering from the colic, and when I found him it was too late to save him. We dragged him down the ravine a little way, and there was no danger of his body proving a source of trouble at the house, for in a few hours his bones were stripped by the buzzards and bleaching in the sun.

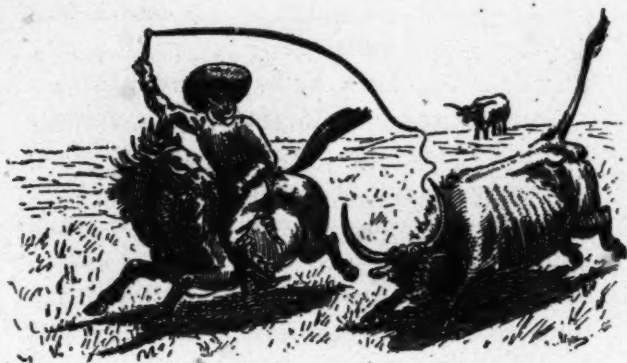
It is wonderful to see how soon these birds find out a dead body. You might ride about the country for miles without seeing one, but let a carcass be thrown out on the prairie, and in a short time you will see first one black speck in the sky, and then another, and

another, until soon there may be some dozens of the natural scavengers, the ugly, bald-headed turkey-buzzards, engaged in tearing it to pieces.

About the first of October old Mrs. Crompton left us on a visit to her old home in Iowa, and shortly afterwards Steve and John had a big quarrel. John could not agree with Steve's wife, and, of course, Steve had to take her part. Words came to blows, and there was a rush for weapons; John got an axe, and Steve a pitch-fork, and there would doubtless have been murder if the two women and myself had not parted them. After this they could not live in the same house; so John built a shanty on his own land, and his sister kept house for him.

Of course, I stopped with Steve, as I had been hired by him, but my sympathies were entirely on the other side. I liked John first-rate.

Shortly after this the weather broke, and we had it very rough. Almost every day it rained fearfully hard, and sometimes froze as it fell; so that the cattle and myself were covered with ice. At such times it required



1.—HEADING A REFRACTORY STEER.



2.—HEADED.

all my energy to prevent a general stampede. I had to gallop continually up and down before the face of the cattle, using my whip as they scuttled along before the bitter north wind.

This continual strain wore out my pony. He was quite sore where I had to keep spurring him, and at last he got so used up, that when passing over a piece of rough ground, if I was in a hurry, I was obliged to jump off and leave him, and rush after the cattle on foot. Of course, this could not last long, and the pony gave out completely, and died two or three weeks before the end of the season, and Steve had to get me another.

The last three weeks of the herding was terrible work; wet through or half-frozen nearly every day, and kept in a chronic state of anxiety, not knowing but that at any moment the brutes might make a stampede which I should be powerless to stop. As it was I often had to just let them go before the storm, keeping them together as well as I could, until they struck some creek under cover of which I could work them round by degrees towards home.

How I counted the days and even the hours

of the last two or three weeks, looking forward to the 4th of November! I don't know that I was ever more anxious for a time to come than I was for that date to arrive; the anxiety and strain combined with the unpleasant wet and cold work were so great. At last the long-looked-for day arrived, the herd was broken up, the different cattle sent home to their respective owners, and I returned home with ours, after receiving my pay.

CHAPTER X.

LEAVING HOME AGAIN.

Premature arrangements.—An unexpected check.—Start for Junction.—A silent ride.—My note.—Down the track.—Commence work for Anderson.—Shucking and hauling corn.—A horse trading trial.—Tom Crofter.—Anderson moves.—A bad road.—The mail carrier.—The new farm.—Rats.—Leave Anderson.

BEFORE leaving I had made arrangements with John Crompton to go to a good school at Junction during the coming winter. We were going to rent a small place in town, and his sister was going to keep house for us. I had got about enough money to keep me through the winter, as living is very cheap, and the tuition at the school was free. But the old adage says, "Never count your chickens before they are hatched," and I guess that I was a little premature in my arrangements.

When I arrived home with our cattle and my twenty-seven dollars—for I had not spent

a cent as yet,—I learned to my surprise that I was expected to share the money with my brother Jack. This, of course, would upset all my plans for the winter, and so I was very loth to part. Besides, I could not see the justice of it, for I had not only been keeping myself through the summer, while food was scarce owing to the hoppers' visit, but I had also herded the cattle free of charge, when I might have been staying at Blake's all the time. Of course, they claimed that if I had been at home, and got up a herd, that any profit would have been divided; but I tried that in the spring, and could not get enough cattle together; besides which there would have been my keep through the summer, and the wear and tear of a pony.

Still, I failed to convince them of the justice of my views, and had to shell out. This knocked over all my arrangements, and I felt it so much that I declared that I would not stop at home; but I guess they did not believe that I meant it, for Jack and I were sent to town the next day to sell a load of wheat. Jack was to buy some clothes and other things, while I was supposed to be going with the

object of buying books for my schooling, but that was quite out of the question, as I could not keep myself all through the winter on fourteen dollars.

We started for Junction at five o'clock in the morning, of course long before daylight, as it was a good long day's journey, seventeen miles either way, and we had a good heavy load to take over the rough country road. I guess it was a pretty dull ride that, for I was kinder sulky, and not a word I spoke all the time. As we were going along after the sun had risen and it was broad daylight, Jack pulled the tail off a buffalo's hide which we had over our knees, and, throwing it in the grass beside the track, said, "I wonder if we shall see that when we come back!" These were the only words spoken on our journey, for I would not reply, but thought to myself, "Well, you may perhaps, but I shan't. I guess I shall be several miles away by that time."

We arrived at Junction after a while, and sold our wheat. We then hitched our team to a post, and Jack went to get his photograph taken. He wanted me to come too, very much, but I would not. I did not feel in the humour.

I should not have looked very pleasant in a photo just then. I left Jack ostensibly to get my books, but I went to another store, and bought some good rough serviceable clothes, some crackers, and a pencil. I had the clothes made in a parcel, then ate the biscuits, and with the pencil wrote a short note to Jack on the paper bag. The note was as follows: "Good-bye, Jack, I'm going away. Don't wait for me, for I'm not coming home any more." This epistle I tied on the whip-handle, and saying "good-bye" to the old horses, started off down the river eastwards, my idea being to work my way along, gradually earning enough money to enable me to return to England.

After travelling a mile or two along the railroad track, I went down under a little bridge and changed my clothes, leaving the majority of my old things there. This I did, not from any fear of detection,—for I did not suppose for a minute that they would try to find me and bring me back,—but simply because my old clothes were quite played out, having been worn all summer.

By night I arrived at Ogden, a little town

about ten miles down the river, below Fort Riley, and here I put up at a boarding-house. I inquired about work, and could have obtained it close at hand, but preferred to get further away. I travelled along on the railroad track again next day for some miles. It is the recognised highway for all foot travellers, as it is not only the nearest way from town to town, but it is easier walking. The bridges were nasty things to cross though, as they are only trestle-built structures. The metals are laid on big square wooden logs, eighteen inches apart, and one had to step from one to the other. It was not a very nice job; a false step would have sent one headlong into the river, or on to the rocks a hundred feet below. There was only a single track, so that it was best to make sure that there was no train coming in either direction, because to meet it on the bridge one would have to lie down or else hang on underneath while the train passed over him. Still, as there were but four trains a day, a passenger and a goods each way, there was not much danger in that direction.

That afternoon I passed through Manhattan, thirty miles from Junction, and when about

five miles beyond there, in Pottawattamie county, I met a young man on a pony, who asked a question about some stray horses. I inquired for work, and he told me that, if I went down to his father-in-law's farm, a little farther on, I could no doubt get some corn husking to do. I went on and soon found the place, and was engaged at 75 cents a day during the time that the job should last. I found the farmer was a Swede, named Anderson. He had a big family, mostly young, and one daughter rather older, who was married to the young man I had met, Tom Crofter, a Scotchman. They lived with the old people.

They had a big farm, though it was only rented, and there was work for some few weeks, husking. The Indian corn ripens about the end of September, or rather later, but, unlike most crops, it is not necessary to gather it at once. The ears are covered by the shucks, and it can stand out in the field for a long time without being damaged, so that it can be gathered at the farmers' convenience.

There was another man in Anderson's employment, a German, Henry, and we three

worked away husking corn for a good time. The usual plan of work is like this. The corn having been planted in the usual way in rows and hills, a waggon is driven straight along over one row. One man takes three rows on one side of the waggon, and another three rows on the other, while a third takes the "down row," that is, the row broken down by the waggon, and assists a bit on either side as required.

The hand is armed with a "shucking-peg"—either of wood or iron fastened on with a thong,—which tears open the shucks on the ears of corn, which are then pulled off the stalks, and thrown into the waggon. When this is full, it is driven to the corn crib and emptied by means of a big scoop shovel, a slanting board having been previously put in one end of the waggon, to form a surface for the shovel to work on.

The three of us could husk and unload about a hundred and twenty-five bushels a day, five waggon loads. When this work was all completed, we were nearly into the middle of winter, so I agreed to stop on with Anderson for a while, for my board and lodging, and

Henry did the same, doing the "chores,"—that is, attending to the cattle, and "hewing wood and drawing water," etc.

As spring drew near, and the price of corn was raised, Anderson began to sell, and then we had plenty of work, hauling it to town, where, after being weighed on a big "Fairbanks'" scale, it had to be unloaded into the immense cribs which the traders had built in town. This was very hard work, using the big scoop, which held nearly half a bushel, for the cribs were so high and full that it was as much as one could do to throw the corn high enough. The waggons, when unloading, were always surrounded by lots of pigs and cows belonging to the townspeople, which picked up the stray ears which fell to the ground.

Old Anderson was very fond of his drops, and usually returned partially drunk, for he and I generally came to town; and while I unloaded the waggon, he paid a visit to the "saloon," as all drinking-bars are there called. He used at first to try and get me to drink with him, but after my little experiment with the neat whisky up at home, I had forsworn all spirituous liquors; so he generally gave me

a quarter of a dollar, and told me to buy crackers or apples or candy and take some home to the children.

Of course, I did not want a shilling's worth of sweets every day, and, while generally taking some to the children, I saved a little money during this period, although not in receipt of any regular wages.

Anderson, as a rule, was a very morose, surly sort of man, but, when a little under the influence of whisky, became quite jolly and prodigal with his money. Henry was just the reverse; he was usually a very good-natured, lively individual, going about his work, singing and whistling, but directly he got outside a few glasses of whisky, his manner was very different. He was then exceedingly irritable, and went about swearing and quarrelling with every one. He was by no means an abstainer; he could not, in fact, wait until he got to town for his liquor, but kept a bottle hidden away out in the stable or elsewhere.

Once Tom and I found a bottle of whisky in the side of a haystack, and Tom made punch with the contents for himself and his

wife, and then returned the empty bottle to its hiding-place. Henry did not say anything about it, but was rather out of temper for some time.

While I was staying here, Anderson traded horses with a neighbour, and we had rather an amusing time over it.

The neighbour, an old Englishman, named Hockley, proposed the exchange, which was, his three-year-old filly, not broken in, for Anderson's old blind mare, a steady-going old work-horse. Anderson, having two or three teams, was nothing loth, and the "swop" was made, but two days afterwards Hockley came over to say that the mare had died during the night, and he wanted his filly back again. Of course, Anderson could not see the force of this, and Hockley went to law to recover her.

The action came off before the "Squire" and twelve of the neighbours, who assembled at his house to form the jury. The "Squire" was a farmer like the rest of them, but a sort of justice of the peace.

In the meantime the filly was hidden away, for Anderson was determined not to give her up, whether he lost or won.

The action was not for damages, but simply to recover the young mare; so one dark night we put her in a little uninhabited log-house, which stood on another man's farm, a long way from any other buildings, and we used to go and feed and water her by night. It was well that we did hide her, for one night we were awaked by the dogs, who found two men prowling about the stable, evidently Hockley and his man, looking for the filly.

At last the day for the trial came round, and we all repaired to "Squire" Dick Holt's house. He very seldom had anything to do in his official capacity, as the county was but thinly settled, and, in fact, they had to hunt rather wide for the jury. Amongst his other duties a squire is authorised to perform the marriage ceremony, which is done in a very off-hand and business-like manner. Here is a description, culled from an American paper.

Squire. "Have him?"

Bride. "Yes."

Squire. "Have her?"

Bridegroom. "Kinder."

Squire. "Done. One dollar."

This is perhaps rather shorter than usual, but the "ceremony" is always very simple.

Squire Holt's residence was but a one-roomed log-house, and not of the largest dimensions, so that with the jury and the witnesses on both sides the "court" was rather closely packed.

There were no solicitors, or, as they there term themselves, "attorneys at law," present, and the trial began by old Hockley stating his case in person.

After being sworn, he said :—

"Mr. Squire, and gentlemen of the jury, with your leave, I guess I'll jest tell you the facts of this here case. On the fourteenth of December I went to see Anderson yonder, as I was a-wanting another work-horse. I offered to swop my three-year-old filly, which ain't broke, to him for a blind mare which he owned. The defendant comes over to see the filly, and I goes over to see the mare, and I agreed to take her on trial for a week. The defendant agrees, and I takes the mare home, and then takes the filly to defendant's. She was worked the next day and seemed pretty bully, but the next morning my little

Dutchman finds her dead as nails in the stable, with her head in a pool of blood, and I guess I've got witnesses to prove all what I say. Now, I claim that the mare was in a bad way when defendant got rid of her, and he knew it, and I hold that he oughter return my filly. These are the facts of the case, and I hope you'll see that my demands is just, and give me my dues."

Cross-examined by the defendant. *A.* "I believe you owned it was you and not me proposed the swop?"

H. "Yes, I wanted a work-horse at once, and didn't want to wait to break the filly in."

A. "Jess so. Who did you make the arrangement with about taking the mare on trial for a week? It wasn't me."

H. "Yes, it was; I told you I would try her for a week."

A. "You're a liar, man!"

"Order! order!" from the Squire.

A. "Why, if I'd only agreed to let you have the mare for a week, do you think I'd have taken the filly to feed, and p'raps break in, and all for nothing? That's enough!"

The next witness, Antoine Prosser, a little Dutchman, whom we always thought but half-witted, was then called.

H. "You are in my employ, ain't you?"

Prosser. "Oh yes, I does works for you. Vat for you say so?"

H. "To let the court know who you are. Now tell us all you can about this swap. Did I have the mare on trial or not?"

P. "Oh yaas, dat is so."

H. "Which is so?"

P. "You trade ze horse."

H. "I guess you don't quite understand. Did I have the mare on trial?"

P. "Oh yaas, dat is so."

H. "And two days afterwards you found the mare dead in the stable?"

P. "Oh yaas, dat is so all."

H. "And there was a lot of blood?"

P. "Oh yaas, there was plenty bleed."

H. "How much?"

P. "Oh, much bleed."

H. "Yes, but how much."

P. "Big heaps."

H. "Very well, that will do."

P. "Oh yaas."

Cross-examined by defendant.

"One minute, Mr. Prosser. You say that the plaintiff had the mare on trial; who told you so? Was it the plaintiff, Mr. Hockley?"

P. "Oh yaas, dat is so."

A. (To the jury.) "Do you call that evidence, gentlemen?" (To the witness.) "Did you hear the arrangement made between us?"

P. "Oh yaas."

A. "Oh, get out; why, man, you weren't there. You found the dead mare in the stable, did you?"

P. "Oh, yaas, dat is so."

A. "How was she laying?"

P. "She laying on ze ground still."

A. "And there was blood? And where did it come from?"

P. "She have bleed of ze nose."

A. "How much was there?"

P. "There was much bleed."

A. "Yes, but how much? What sized pool was it? was it as big as that?" opening his arms about a yard.

P. "Oh yaas, dat is so."

A. "And how deep was it?"

P. "There was much bleed."

A. "Yes, but how deep was it? Was it as deep as that?" holding one hand a foot above the other.

P. "Oh yaas, dat is so."

A. "There was a pile of 'bleed' three feet wide and a foot deep. Sir, do you know that you are on your oath? Do you know what an oath is?"

P. "Oh yaas, it is schwear; Mishter Hockley makes much schwear." (Laughter.)

A. "Thank you; that's all I've got to ask you."

P. "Oh yaas."

The next witness, another man in Hockley's employment, was sworn, and deposed to the mare being found dead in the stable; but, upon cross-examination, he admitted that he did not hear that she was only upon trial until after she was dead, and it was also elicited that the mare had been very hard-worked the previous day, having travelled nearly fifty miles. This closed the case for the prosecution.

The defendant Anderson then laid his statement before the jury.

"Mr. Squire and gentlemen, I guess it won't

be necessary for me to say much after the evidence we drew out just now. I can only say that the plaintiff came to me of his own free will, and offered to swop his filly for my mare. I went to see his filly and agreed to trade. Nothing was said about taking my mare on trial. Lord knows, he knew the mare well enough. If the mare was sick, I didn't know it; she seemed well enough when I had her. I went to see her after she died, and found her lying in the stable, with a little blood from her nose. I guess the pool of 'bleed' had kind o' soaked up, for there wasn't much to be seen when I got there. I guess she had overpulled the day before, as you know blind horses sometimes will. There's nothing more for me to say, except that the plaintiff and his little Dutchman seem to have agreed to tell lies and swear to 'em." ("Order! order!")

Cross-examined by Hockley. "Do you mean to say that I didn't tell you out by the corral that I wanted the mare on trial?"

A. "Ay, and you know it well enough."

H. "Well, as I had no witness there I can't prove it, but I guess my word's as good

as yours. On your oath now, can you swear that the mare was in good health when you saw her last?"

A. "No, I can't exactly swear that."

H. "Ah! I thought as much. What ailed her?"

A. "When?"

H. "Why, when you traded her to me?"

A. "Nothing."

H. "Why, you said just now that you couldn't swear that she was in good health!"

A. "No, I didn't."

H. "Well, what did you say then?"

A. "I said that I couldn't swear she was in good health when I saw her last."

H. "Well, that's what I said. What was the matter with her?"

A. "Well, when I saw her last, she was dead." (Laughter.)

H. "Bah! I mean what was the matter with her when you traded her to me."

A. "Nothing. She has been overworked, that's what killed her."

The next witness, Tom Crofter, was called, and he swore that he was present when the "swop" was made, and that the plaintiff did

not propose to have the mare on trial at all. This was corroborated by Anderson's man Henry, and myself.

I had been over with Anderson to see the dead mare, and was subjected to a close cross-examination by Hockley, but he failed to shake my first statements. This concluded the defence, and the jury were called upon for their verdict.

They stepped out of doors into the snow, as that was the only retiring-room, and after a very few minutes' deliberation (for it was mighty cold) returned with a verdict for the defendant, which, of course, was the only thing they could have done after the very evident perjury on the plaintiff's side.

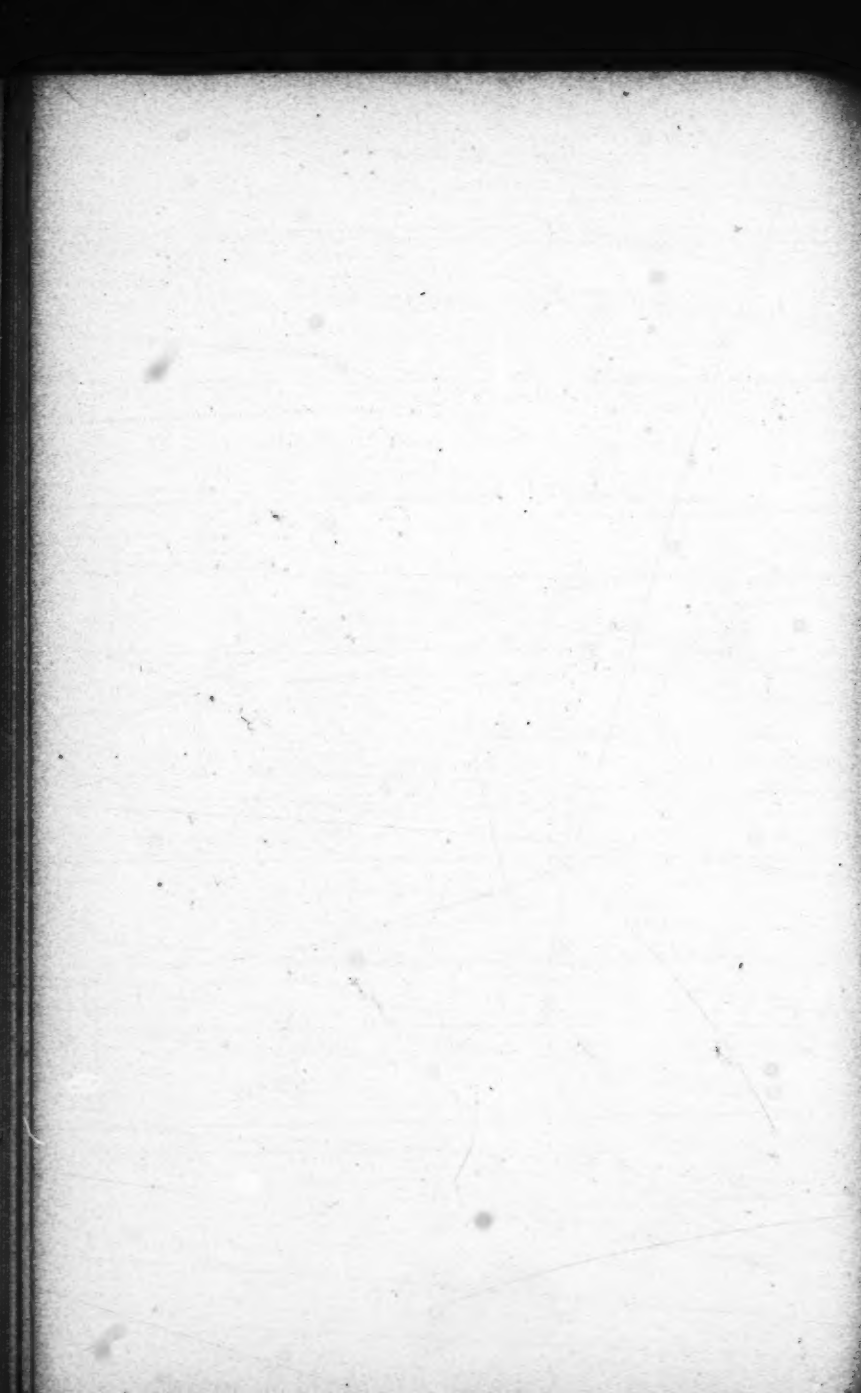
Old Hockley abused Anderson a bit, and evidently fancied himself a very aggrieved individual.

After the trial we went to the log-hut where the filly was hidden, and brought her home in triumph, after Anderson had added insult to injury by telling Hockley where she was, and assuring him that he would never have got her back, even if the verdict had been in his favour.



THE JURY DELIBERATING.

[To face page 192.]



After this things went along pretty smoothly; we had our regular "chores" to do, but very little besides. We went shooting very often in the woods which fringed the Kansas river, which ran near us, and sometimes got a good many rabbits, prairie hens, and quails, and occasionally a wild goose.

Now and then we got a glimpse of a beaver, of which there were many in the river, as was evident from the way in which the trees were cut down; large cottonwood-trees, a foot thick, were felled by their powerful teeth, but the beavers were very shy, so that we never managed to shoot one.

Tom Crofter was a splendid shot. He had been a Texan "cow-boy," and had had a good deal of practice. He had spent a few years on the trail, driving cattle from away down in Texas up to Kansas, where they were shipped on to the cars and sent east to market, either to Chicago or New York. It is rather rough work, travelling by slow stages to allow the cattle to feed as they go for over a thousand miles, passing right through the Indian territory, where they are liable at any time to be attacked either by Indians or white

cattle thieves. Of course, the cow-boys are armed to the teeth, and as they are well-known to be rather desperate characters, unless the odds are very great against them they are seldom attacked.

The cattle at night are bunched up, and the "boys" take it in turns riding round them all through the night to scare away either wild animals or thieves. A fire is lit to cook their supper by, beside the waggon which accompanies them, and the boys, save one as a watcher, fall asleep afterwards either in the waggon or on the ground around it.

The boys are usually about a dozen in number, but vary according to the size of the herd, which may be of any size from one to three thousand cattle. After they have sold and shipped the cattle, the boys go on the loose generally for a few weeks, and mostly manage to spend all the money that they have earned before returning. Brawls in the saloons are of very frequent occurrence, and as the bowie-knife and revolver were always close at hand, the loss of an occasional cow-boy was a natural consequence.

Tom Crofter carried a bowie-knife with him

always, which was in such good trim that he used to shave with it.

Wichita and Abilene were the towns most favoured with the cow-boys' presence, and those places were regular pandemoniums.

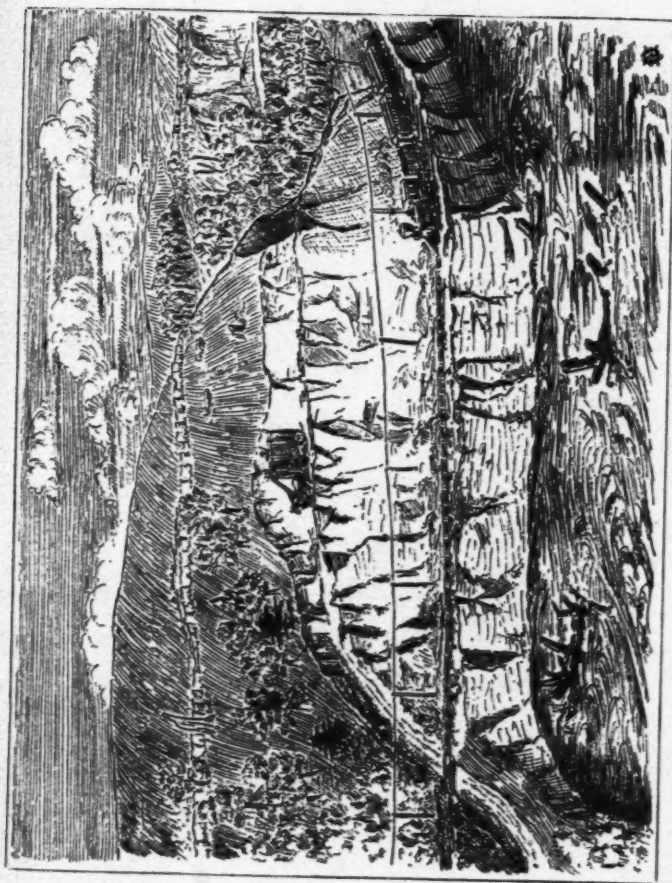
In the early spring Anderson rented another farm, and moved higher up the river, about four miles above Manhattan, and then we had a fine time, moving all the hay, corn, stock, tools, implements, and furniture. It was about the worst bit of road I have ever seen,—and I have seen some bad ones,—the road between Manhattan and the new farm. At one spot we went down a road, carved out of the hill-side overhanging a creek, which we reached at last, and crossed at the ford; and then there was another great hill to go up, which landed us within a stone's throw of our first hill, after wandering about for nearly half a mile amongst the trees and through the ravine. Then came a little bit of comparatively level ground, and then another hill, where the road was only a shelf cut in the hill, overhanging a railroad track, with beneath that the river rushing along. The shelf was only wide enough to pass one waggon at a time, save for two or three gaps

cut a little deeper into the bluff, and it was always a matter of chance whether or not you might meet a vehicle and be unable to reach one of these havens in time.

It was lively work, I can assure you, driving a big load of hay over there, after having already come over some rough ground; a little extra tilt, and the whole thing might be thrown over the precipice on to the track, and then into the river.

One day we met a buggy on this hill before we could get quite into the wider place, but we were fortunately on the inside, and so stood still to let the trap pass us. Of course, our load of hay took a good deal of room, and it was only by the very barest chance that they managed to pass. I expected every second to see them precipitated below, but the buggy being narrow, they could just squeeze by. If it had been an ordinary waggon, they could not have done it. One of us would have had to back.

I was very glad when the moving was over, for I certainly considered it dangerous work travelling with big loads as we did. Of course, for ordinary travelling to town it was not so



A ROUGH BIT OF ROAD.

[To face page 196.]

bad, but to be perched away up on top of a big load of hay, and with nothing to hang on to if it slipped—well, I'd rather be excused from any more.

The new farm was not so large, nor nearly so well kept, as the one Anderson had left, and in fact I guess it was rather a come-down for him. Still, one could hardly wonder at it from the amount of money he must have spent in drink. His visits to town were very frequent; and I can hardly say that I ever saw him come back quite sober. I am surprised that he did not get a farm of his own, which he could easily have done by going a little further west and "homesteading" eighty acres. Of course, it would entail some hard work, breaking the land, and so on; but then he would have had the satisfaction of knowing that any improvements which he made on the farm would be for his own benefit, and not for a landlord's.

Besides this, all the crops he could raise would be his own entirely, without a third part having to go to the owner as at present. That is the usual rent when cash payment is not decided on, which it seldom is. But I

don't think Anderson had enough energy in him to start a prairie farm for himself, and he could not live far away from a town and whisky.

Anderson had a nephew, who was a mail carrier between Manhattan and a town thirty-five miles up the Blue River, who used to come and stay with us overnight twice a week, when at this end of the journey. His father had the contract for carrying the mails twice a week each way, but the son usually did the work, which in winter was pretty rough.

No matter what the weather was, he must go, and though he was certain that he might get stuck in a drift, he must make a start. Sometimes he drove a little buggy, and sometimes he rode horseback, and though he was often delayed by the badness of the roads, he managed to pull through somehow. He always carried a couple of revolvers with him, in case he should be stopped by anyone, but I never heard of him being molested. I guess the mails between those towns were not worth much.

Our new farm was situated right on the banks of the Kansas River, and the land was

very sandy ; still, it was good corn land, though one effect was that it was overrun with sand-burrs,—vile weeds, all prickles, which rendered it almost impossible to walk about bare-footed as one would like to do. They are not content with being stationary, but a little wind will start the dead branches and seed-pods rolling, and they stick to everything they touch. The cactus is nothing to them. Creek farms are always more or less infested with them, but they are comparatively scarce on the prairie.

The new house was but a two-roomed affair, with a basement beneath, and as we were rather a large family,—ten in number,—it was none too large for us. Still, we managed somehow, Henry and I sleeping down below while we were there; but we did not stay long.

There was a peculiar hollow in the land, a sort of natural sink, with a good-sized pond in the bottom, and the house and out-buildings were built round about it. The stables were of the kind known as "Kansas stables," that is, built with a few forked posts stuck in the ground, with poles laid across, and the roof

and sides built up with sods, brush, manure, and rubbish of all sorts.

As Tom Crofter was living with the old man, after we had mended up the fences,—which were in a very bad condition,—and got in the crops, there was no more work for Henry and me, as two men were more than enough to run the farm through the summer. Henry got work with a neighbouring German, and I hired out with a farmer named Whiteman, some four miles higher up the river.

Tom Crofter had rented a small piece of land adjoining Whiteman's farm, and I went up to help plough it and plant corn. We had rather a fine time up here, for we camped out during our stay, preferring to do that than to go home every night. There was an empty loghouse on the place, which we tried to sleep in on the first night, but we were woke up by the rats running all over us. I tell you we cleared out of there in a hurry, as the shanty was infested with them.

On the following night we just lit our fire and cooked our supper at some distance from the building, and then rolled ourselves up in our blankets on the ground. There we could

sleep in peace, for even if roofless, we were ratless.

In the morning we took a dip in the lake near by, and then, after breakfast, were ready to start ploughing again.

While engaged on this work, Whiteman came over to have a look at us, and asked if I wanted work. I told him I should be out in a short time, and he hired me for six months at ten dollars, including, of course, board and lodging.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER CHANGE.

The Whiteman family—John Hardy—Beer gardens—Harvesting—Fourth of July—Heavy storm—Swimming in the cornfields—Horses on the railroad—A funeral—The Eureka Valley—The lake—Thrashing—A panther—Another chance of adoption—My watch.

WHEN our job was done I returned home with Tom and worked a few more days for Anderson, and then packed up my very few belongings and went to Whiteman's.

I found that the family consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Whiteman and four daughters, and there was besides a hired man, John Hardy. They lived in quite a fine house, having actually five rooms in it, with a verandah and mosquito blinds of green muslin; the largest and most comfortable house I had seen on a Kansas farm. His farm, too, was in fine condition, had an osage-orange hedge all round it, and a nice orchard, and he was building a

splendid big stone barn and stable, the largest in the neighbourhood.

The family was much better educated than most of the people I had mixed with, but were considered rather straight-laced by the neighbours, for Whiteman did not swear, except on very special occasions, and on Sundays nearly all the family drove over in the buggy to Manhattan to attend meeting. I believe that they were both members of a Church, but I guess I have seen Whiteman thrash one or two of his daughters for quite a slight offence, until he was about tired out. I didn't think that that showed a remarkably Christian spirit.

Hardy and I had Sundays to ourselves after the "chores" were done. We were allowed to take a horse, and were at liberty for the rest of the day to go where we liked. Occasionally we went to meeting at the school-house on the hill; but more frequently we amused ourselves walking or riding about in the woods around the lake, or swimming in the river. Now and then I went down to see my old friends, the Andersons, who were always pleased to have me call.

Hardy, though, used to go very often on Sundays to some German beer gardens in the woods near town, where all sorts of amusements were carried on, just the same as on the continent,—music, dancing, beer-drinking, card-playing, etc. I went with him once to see what it was like; but as I never was fond of dancing, and was a total abstainer, I did not care to go again.

The beer drunk was only lager, and very mild, so that no harm ever arose on that score, and perhaps there was no more harm in spending Sunday in that way than in the way most young fellows do over there,—fishing, shooting, swimming, or horse-running.

The summer wore on without anything of special importance arising; we “cultivated” our corn, and then harvesting came on, during which period we had a busy time. Of course, we three could not do it all, and the neighbours helped one another, as the usual custom is. The grain was all cut by machine; one never sees a reaping-hook out there. It requires about six men to keep up with a machine. Binding is nice work, but rather hard, and it wants some practice to make a good tight job

of the sheaves. I could get along very well, and keep my station clear as well as the rest of them; but one has to be on the jump all the time, to get all bound and out of the way before the machine comes round again.

We had a lot of this work, for Whiteman, having a good many acres himself, it, of course, took us a good many days' work to counterbalance those on which the different neighbours worked for us.

On the fourth of July we had a holiday, and all repaired to the woods near Manhattan, where a grand picnic was held. We had a splendid time and a most substantial spread under the trees. Then there were "spread eagle" speeches, music, dancing, and all kinds of games, followed in the evening by a grand display of fireworks. Liquor was very plentiful, and I am sorry to say that some of the party, John Hardy amongst the number, got rather elated in consequence. He emptied ten pint bottles of lager beer, which apparently had no effect upon him, but when later in the day he capped these with a few glasses of whisky, he began to get boisterous, and to so misconduct himself, that Whiteman, who had

a great dislike for such practices, gave him notice to quit.

He was replaced by Dick Foote, Whiteman's nephew, who had just come out from Indiana. He was a decent young fellow, and we got along very well together.

When the harvesting was about finished, Whiteman and his wife went east to see the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition and to visit friends, and were absent some two months, during which time Dick and I ran the farm, ploughing the stubble land up, and getting ready for the next crops, besides cutting and getting in all the hay.

While they were absent we had a terrific thunder-storm and heavy rain, which did a good deal of damage about the country. There was such a quantity of water fell, that in one part of the corn-field, where there was a little hollow running across, there was a fast-rushing stream four feet deep, right up to the ears of maize. Dick and I waded in to see how deep it was, and were carried off our feet and had to swim for it. At another part of the farm we had a lot of hay cut, and this was washed away until it was caught

and deposited on top of the hedge. All this was where, in the ordinary way, no water ran at all, simply in a little dip in the land.

During the storm, which was in the night, one of the bullocks in the corral was struck and killed by lightning. In the morning we drove the cattle out and started them away a little bit, and then skinned and buried the ox so as to get him out of the sight of the others; but during the following night the prairie wolves dug the hole open and exposed him to view, and then what a fuss the cattle made when they smelled the blood! They bellowed and snorted and tore up the ground with their hoofs; they fought and gored and trampled upon each other in their excitement, and it was with the greatest difficulty that we managed to get them away from the spot.

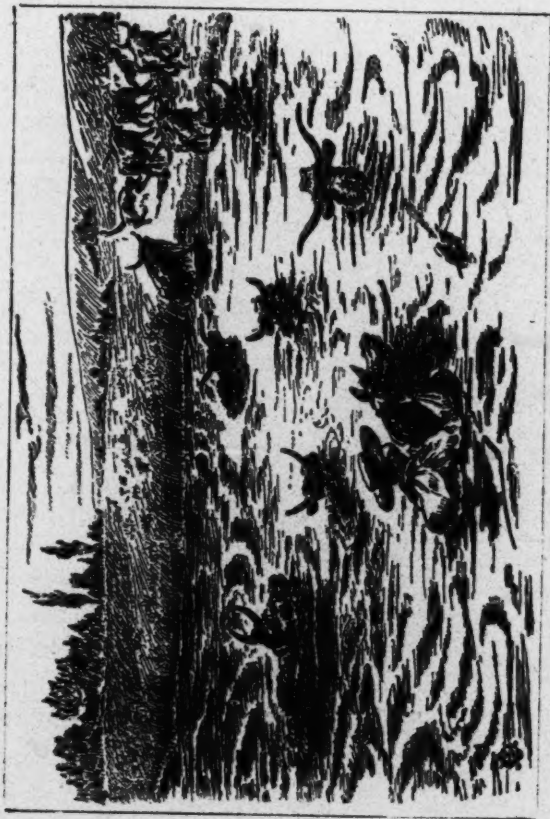
We afterwards dragged the carcass a mile away, and left it to be devoured by the wolves and buzzards.

It is strange that cattle should make such a disturbance over blood; they seemed perfectly mad for the time being.

Towards the first evening after the storm I had to go out and hunt the cattle up for the

night, and I had a nice time of it. It was usually done by one of the daughters, who could all ride first rate, but on this occasion, as there was so much water about, I thought it better to go myself. I found the herd all right after a while and started for home, but on the way we had to cross a spot where there was usually about a foot of water. This evening, though, I found that it seemed very deep, but the cattle started across and so I followed. Presently the water came up to my feet and then to my knees, so I drew my legs up and sat on the saddle with my feet on the pony's withers, for I didn't care about getting wet through again just then.

However, it was no good, for before long the water reached up to the saddle, and in a few minutes the whole herd was swimming. I put my feet down and stuck to the pony, and as a horse when swimming is pretty deep under water except for his head and neck, of course I got soaked up as high as my chest. Still we reached the opposite bank in safety, and I guess I took those cattle home at a good sharp rate to get them warm and dry, for the nights were beginning to get chilly now.



AFTER THE STORM.

[To face page 208.]



One evening about this time I saw a herd of horses run into by the train, and five of them were killed or so badly hurt that they had to be shot. The railroad track ran across the valley a little way below our farm, and the cattle and horses used to feed around there often; and on this occasion a bunch of horses got on it, and did not go off when the train came along. As it approached, the driver blew his whistle and rang his bell, but the horses, instead of getting off, ran along the track for some distance, until they drew near to a trestle bridge across a ravine.

By this time they could not get down off the track, as it had risen on a high embankment; they could not go back because of the train following them, nor could they cross the bridge. The driver did not attempt to slack down, but dashed on to the helpless drove, who stood huddled together quaking with fear. In a second the engine was upon them, and the powerful cow-catcher in front flung them right and left and sent them rolling down the embankment on to the stones below.

The train passed on without a pause to see what damage was done, and was soon out of sight. I galloped up, and found three of the

poor things quite dead, and the other two with their legs broken and otherwise injured. I knew who they belonged to, and rode up to tell the owners, who came down and shot them.

Such things occur occasionally, for the drivers very seldom trouble to stop their engines for cattle on the track. The farmer, however, usually gets compensation from the railway company.

During the summer, I attended the funeral of a young lady, the daughter of a neighbouring farmer, who had died under somewhat painful circumstances.

Miss Dora Shepherd was a very beautiful girl, and as lively and gay as she was pretty. Her death was caused by dancing when she had something the matter with her foot, which would probably have got right with a little rest, but being of a very lively disposition, she persisted in going to the dance, and the consequence was that her foot and leg became very bad.

After a while she was taken east to St. Louis, Missouri; and here it was eventually decided that amputation was necessary. This was carried into effect, but she died shortly

after the operation, and was brought home to be buried.

All the Methodist community looked upon her death as being a judgment for dancing, and never lost an opportunity of bringing it up as an example.

The funeral was very simple, but impressive, and took place in the ground attached to the school-house. The coffin was carried by several young girls, her former companions, and was completely smothered in flowers. There was a glass panel over the face, and the corpse was dressed in her best clothes, and looked very beautiful when we all passed round to take the last look.

This was the only funeral that I ever saw in our parts; they seemed to be rare occurrences. The district was certainly very healthy, though I don't think that we were quite like the town out west, which Mark Twain described as being "so beastly healthy that they had to kill a man to start a cemetery."

Whiteman's farm was certainly one of the best I have seen. It was splendidly situated near the banks of the Kansas River, in the fertile Eureka Valley, which was enclosed by

high bluffs, which helped to make the fine rich bottom land for which the valley was noted, the fine loam washing down by the heavy rains, and leaving the big limestone rocks behind. A short distance from the farm was the Eureka Lake, one of the most beautiful places imaginable. It was of irregular winding shape, and nestled down among steep banks, clad with trees almost tropical in their luxuriance. A large island stood in the middle, and here the vegetation was magnificent. Great cottonwood trees towered up, festooned with Virginia creeper and wild grapevines, while over the smaller trees and undergrowth the wild hops, cucumbers, and gourds cast their brilliant green network, making it most difficult to force a passage through. Here flourished the coffee-bean tree, which in the springtime is covered with large clusters of pink and white flowers, something like the horse-chestnut, but giving out a most powerful and sweet perfume, scenting the air for a long distance around; also the black locust tree, with its great prickles a foot or eighteen inches long, bristling from its otherwise clean smooth bark.

Again, in the early spring, before the leaves were on the trees, the iron-wood tree decked the landscape with its bright pink blossoms, similar to the Japanese almond, and in the autumn the woods were gay with the waw-hoo's brilliant scarlet and orange berries, in addition to the splendid colours of the dying leaves.

Besides these more conspicuous trees there were numberless other varieties, as the hickory, hackberry, black-walnut, the black, white, live, and scrub oak, the white, red, wych, and water elm, ash, yew, cedar, mulberry, and the stately plane tree. The undergrowth was a tangle of gooseberry bushes, raspberry and blackberry canes, vines and creeping plants, dog-wood, box-elder, wild plum trees, pawpaws, cherries, withes, reeds and rushes, all growing in the most dense, picturesque, and wild confusion.

As the island was not often visited, owing to the difficulty of access without a boat, game was very plentiful, but during the winter, when the lake was frozen over, the young fellows crossed and shot and hunted a good deal.

The lake teemed with sun-fish, cat-fish, bass

suckers, and turtles, and we often spent an hour of an evening practising the gentle art, frequently with good results.

When Whiteman returned from Philadelphia, we set to work thrashing out the small grain, and had a fine time of it. He had several stacks, and the work was mostly done on the same principle as the harvesting, that is, the neighbours came and helped, and Whiteman worked for them in return, either himself, or by sending a substitute, so that, as nearly all the grain in the valley was thrashed at the same time, it kept us busy for a while. The thrashing machine, and some of the horses in use, belonged to one or two parties, who make it a business of going about the country working either for cash, or taking a part of the grain thrashed. The farmer whose grain is being thrashed finds the other horses necessary for turning the gear, as well as the majority of the hands required, and boards and lodges the men for as long as they stay on his farm. It is nice, lively work, though some positions are fearfully dirty, notably the straw-stack, and this position was usually mine.

At Whiteman's I built a tremendous straw-stack, the largest in the valley, and it was so straight and substantial, that I was almost invariably selected for stacking at the neighbours' places when their thrashing came round.

The feeding of the machine was very dirty work, too, and, in fact, we nearly all looked like niggers by the time we quitted work. There were usually about twelve men employed, one on the wheat-stack, who pitched the sheaves to another, who laid them on a table with the ears towards the machine, where the band was cut by a third man armed with a blade from a reaping machine, set in a handle. He passed the now loose wheat to the feeder, who guided it into the drum. The grain then ran out at the side of the machine and employed three more men, measuring, sacking, and carrying away, while the straw went up the elevator and gave employment to two, or sometimes, when the stack was high, three more hands, and then there was a man or boy on the platform, over the horse-gear, to keep the horses going at the right rate.

Thrashers always live on the fat of the land,

and the quantity of fried chicken and pumpkin pie consumed is pretty considerable. The principal meal is supper, about six or seven at night, after the regular day's work is done; but the other two meals, breakfast and dinner, are also substantial ones. There is no tea, only three meals. Of course tea is drunk, but coffee is the principal drink out there.

The men travelling with the machine, and some of the farmers living a little distance away, sleep on the place, mostly out of doors, about the waggons or the stacks.

It was getting late in the autumn now, and it was rather cold to wake up of a morning with white frost all over one. By the time thrashing was over, the corn was ripe, and we then started gathering it, and this kept White-man, Dick, and me engaged for some time, for there was a big patch to do.

I was out on one of the neighbouring farms at one time, with some more young fellows, where there was a fine orchard, and I guess we didn't go to sleep until we had sampled their fruit to a considerable extent.

There was a panther, or perhaps, more correctly speaking, a jaguar, killed just across

the river during the autumn. For some time it was known to be in the neighbourhood, and it at length attacked a man and pretty badly damaged him. The settlers then got up a hunt, and after a little time found him in the woods and managed to shoot him.

Such things are now remarkably scarce, that one was the only one heard of for several years, and it caused a considerable scare on the river.

While here I received another offer of adoption. This made the third offer I had had, for while at Anderson's I was asked by old Hockley to take up my abode with him and his wife, but I could not quite see it, they were such a disgustingly dirty lot. This time, however, the circumstances were rather different.

Living with Whiteman's family was an old maiden lady, Miss Avarilla Goodwin, a retired "school-marm." She owned a first-rate farm, which she was obliged to let out, having no one to attend to it, and so proposed to adopt me. She was a very nice old lady, and much liked by all who knew her, and I have not the slightest doubt but that we should have

agreed very well, but as I was even then on my way home to my mother, I could scarcely fall in with the arrangement.

She had a niece though, in Manhattan, who came to see her sometimes, one of the prettiest girls I have ever seen, which might have been a powerful argument, if I had been at all inclined to stay in the country.

When the husking was done, we spent a while hauling corn to town for sale, and then, my six months' agreement being completed, I left Whiteman's and arranged to go back to old England.

Whiteman paid me up all right, though he wanted me to take out as much as I could in store goods, that is, he gave me an order on a store-keeper in town to get anything I wanted, for which he paid in corn, and he would get a higher price for his corn in this way than he would if he sold for cash.

I got a suit of clothes, a pair of boots, and a few small necessities, but as I was going a long journey, of course I wanted cash and not goods, and so could not oblige him much in that respect.

All being squared up between us, I said

good-bye to Whiteman's family, and went to stop a few days with Tom Crofter, who had made another move, and was living up the Blue River, about two miles from Manhattan.

I stayed with him while I arranged what ship I should go by, and then went east. While with him I bought his watch, and the trading instinct being strong with him, I gave him six dollars and exchanged pocket knives. It was a very good little silver watch, of English make, and although a former owner had been out of his mind and taken it apart and put it together again, it still went very well.

CHAPTER XII.

CONCLUSION.

Good-bye to Kansas.—On the ice at Quincy.—Philadelphia.
—The man's thumb.—The sharper.—On board the
Pennsylvania.—Stuck in the ice.—Christmas and New
Year on the sea.—Home again—Ashtabula Bridge.—A
few words of advice.

I LEFT Manhattan by the eastward-bound train about nine o'clock in the morning, the only train in that direction during the day. I was a little late in starting, and how I scuttled down the road from Tom's house, in case I should miss the train! for missing it meant losing a day, and thereby being too late for the sailing of the ship I had a ticket for. But I was in good time, as the train came from away up in Colorado, and I took my seat in the cars for the first time in six years, and soon left the well-known scenes behind me. I passed by the farm where I had first joined Anderson and

Tom Crofter, and then was whirled away into a region quite unknown to me, though, of course, it was the same route I had travelled over in going out from England.

I reached Kansas City the same night, changed cars, and then resumed the journey, sleeping in the cars, which were very comfortable, until we arrived at Quincy, Illinois, which city we reached at three o'clock on Sunday morning. Here we had to put up for twenty-four hours.

I had struck up an acquaintance with the conductor, and went home with him to spend the remainder of the night at an hotel kept by a relation of his, and was made very comfortable. In the morning I had a walk around the town, which seemed a large thriving place. It is situated on the Mississippi River, and I went to have a look at the mighty stream. It was now frozen over, and was alive with people skating, sliding, and sleigh-driving on its broad surface. The ice was three feet thick and without a flaw, and I saw a place where on week days they drove great waggon loads of wood across, while the fine large Mississippi steamers were all frozen in for the winter. It

was a grand sight,—the wide-reaching field of ice,—the river here being a mile wide.

I paid my hotel bill overnight, and retired to bed rather early, as the train started eastwards again at three o'clock on Monday morning. I was asked if I would be called at that time, but I told them I guessed I should get up without calling, trusting to my early rising experiences at old Blake's, and, sure enough, I woke at half-past two, then dressed, and got to the train in good time.

I believe that one can wake up at almost any time, if the mind be made up over night.

From Quincy we passed on to Chicago, where I had to change again, and then on to Pittsburgh, and then at length arrived at Philadelphia, from whence I had arranged to sail instead of from New York. I spent the night at an hotel near the docks; I forget the name of it, but I remember it had a peculiar relic in the coffee room; it was a man's thumb,—the proprietor's,—and was shot off at the battle of Vicksburg. It was preserved in a bottle on the mantelshelf, and formed a highly edifying object of contemplation.

Early in the morning I changed my American greenbacks for good old English gold, which, later in the day, I guess I came near losing. I had gone on board in good time and made my bunk comfortable, and after leaving my belongings down below, was standing around on the quay waiting for the ship to sail, when I was accosted by a spruce, well-dressed, gentlemanly-looking man. He entered into a casual kind of conversation; he said he was going over to England on business connected with his firm, Messrs. So-and-So, of Philadelphia, and such a street, London,—of course, a sham address—and hoped we should have a pleasant voyage, with other small talk. He asked a few questions, as most Americans can, and then said he must go and fetch his portmanteau, and turning to go said we should meet again on board.

A minute later he returned. "My portmanteau is a little heavy, perhaps you wouldn't mind stepping up a couple of blocks, and giving me a lift." There was plenty of time to spare, so I went along. "By the way," said he, presently, "I want to square an account up the street here, before I leave; can

you lend me some money till I get my port-manteau?"

"I've got nothing but English gold," said I.

"Oh! my friend will take that—how much have you got?"

"Four pounds."

"That's all right; if you'll lend me that, I'll just step in here, pay my account, and then give it you back, when I get my trunk."

Like a fool I handed him the money.

"Thanks, I shan't be a minute," as he disappeared in the doors of the store. At that very instant it struck me that all was not right, and I determined not to let him out of my sight, so I followed into the store.

Here my suspicions were confirmed, for he did not attempt to pay any bill, but finding that I was watching him, he bought some trifling article, and went out.

"Oh! the man's not in that I wanted to see," said he.

"All right, let's go and get the bag then."

Well, he walked round the stores and about the streets a bit, and seemed to be wanting to give me the slip, but I had determined

to stick to him like a leech now. At last he said,—

“Ain’t you afraid you’ll lose the ship?”

“Well, ain’t you?”

“Oh, I guess I won’t go by this one.”

“Well, I guess I’d rather lose the ship than my money,” said I; “so pass it over, please.”

“All right, here it is,” said he, handing me some coins.

“Here, these are not what I gave you”—for they were just some gilt tokens or Hanover sovereigns; “these are not worth a cent.”

“They are what you gave me.”

By this time I had found out the sort of man I had to deal with, so I put on a bold front.

“Look here, Mr. Sharper, if you don’t hand over my coins in about two shakes, I’ll let daylight into you,” at the same time putting my hand into a hip pocket, as though I had a revolver; “and see, there’s a policeman coming yonder, so you’d better shell out quietly.”

This he accordingly did, though sorely against his will, judging from the language he indulged in.

It was certainly a narrow squeak, for if I had not been on my guard he might easily have slipped away out of sight. Of course it was exceedingly foolish of me to have let the money out of my hands. I suppose that I ought to have given him in charge of the policeman that I saw, but had I done so I must have stopped in Philadelphia to prosecute, which I did not choose to do; so he escaped justice for that time.

Moral.—Don't be disobliging to strangers, but don't lend them money.

I reached my ship, the *Pennsylvania*, of the "American" line, just in time, and started down the Delaware River at eleven o'clock.

It was fearfully cold weather, for it was now the middle of December, and the Delaware was full of ice, through which the steamer passed with great difficulty. As we got lower down near the sea, the ice became thicker still, until at last our great ocean-going vessel stuck fast in it. The engines were reversed and she backed out, and then rushed at the ice again to attempt to force a passage through, but in vain; there was a crash and a mighty shock that nearly sent every one off their feet,

and then we were fast again. This was tried two or three times without a way being opened, and then we had to back out and lay by while ice-boats came and cut a passage for us.

These boats were little sharp-prowed vessels, which worked in pairs at some distance apart, ramming away and chipping the ice away in great lumps.

In two or three hours we were able to pass through, and out on to the open sea.

The ship was very empty as regards passengers, and I had a much more comfortable time than I had had on the outward voyage. There were only forty steerage passengers on the *Pennsylvania* against nine hundred on the *City of Brooklyn*, but the ship was full of beef, butter, and cheese.

I spent Christmas on the sea, and though perhaps not the most enjoyable one within my remembrance, still we managed to make ourselves pretty comfortable.

Profiting by my former experiences, I had taken a few things on board with me, such as Swiss milk, canned fruit, etc., which with the regulation roast beef and plum pudding made quite a respectable Christmas dinner.

We had some rough, stormy weather, but arrived safely in sight of the Irish coast on New Year's Eve. At midnight all the crew came on deck and made a fearful racket to welcome in the New Year. They rang bells, blew horns and whistles, beat gongs and cans, and shouted themselves hoarse until we reached Cork Harbour.

The weather was still rough, but not so bad as it had been, and it was said that had we been a day earlier, we could never have got in the harbour, the entrance being rather narrow. I suppose, though, that when once in, it is one of the finest harbours in the world.

We left the mails and a few Irish passengers, and then started for Liverpool, which we reached at nine o'clock at night on the 1st of January.

We were not allowed to land, however, until morning, when the Customs' Officers examined our luggage. I started off for London as soon as possible, and though travelling with a lot of half-drunken sailors, who were singing or quarrelling all the way, I arrived there in safety, and the same night reached my old home.

I guess that on my return journey I had had a rather narrow escape on the railway, for on my arrival at home I read in the newspapers of the fall of the bridge of Ashtabula, Ohio,—a bridge which I had passed over a very short time before. The whole structure caved in and let a passenger train through on to the ice below, and the unfortunate people, who did not go through and get drowned, were burned to death by the wreck taking fire. This always takes place if a train is upset, owing to the big red-hot stoves in each car.

In conclusion I should like to give a few words of advice to any one about to emigrate.

Well, of course in the first place, if you have made up your mind to go, you must also make up your mind to rough it. You must cultivate the habit of sleeping in any kind of surroundings, on a board and without a pillow, indoors or out. I have been to sleep on horseback before now.

You must be prepared to cook your own dinner if needs be, and wash and mend your own clothes, and darn your socks if you wear them, and think yourself fortunate if you are

not reduced to the position of a man I knew, who lay in bed while his wife mended his only pair of trousers.

You must not care much for appearances, and be reconciled to seeing patches on your clothes, and again think yourself lucky if they are of the same colour. I have seen brown overalls, with patches of flour-sacking, with the brand and description of the flour in blue letters still on,—and quite a novel and startling pair of pants this combination makes.

You must be prepared to withstand extreme heat and extreme cold, and become indifferent to getting wet through to the skin at intervals, and, above all, you must make up your mind to work, and to work hard.

You must accustom yourself to early rising ; for though you may not fall in with a Zedekiah Blake, still in summer, at least, every farmer starts work pretty early in the morning.

If when you arrive you have any capital, don't immediately invest it in land, or cattle, or horses—you don't know the value of such things in the States yet, even if you did in the old country—but put your money away in a good bank, and hire yourself out to a farmer

for a year or so, until you have got an insight into the habits and customs of the country, the kind of work you will have to do, and the climate you have to prepare for.

You may not be able to get very high wages, if you are inexperienced, but in the end it will pay you, if you even work for awhile for only your board and lodging. You will gain so much knowledge, and be so much better able to start a farm on your own account, that the year so spent will never be regretted or looked upon as wasted.

Let me here caution you against the advertisements one sees in the papers, "Farming taught, etc., premium Ten to Fifty Pounds," as the case may be. This is a gross swindle; for a man, no matter how green he may be in farming matters, is always worth his food and lodging.

Learn to ride as soon as you possibly can; a man or boy who cannot ride is, in a new country, about as valuable as a clerk who cannot write in a city office. I could not ride at all when I first went out, but soon learned, and with the continued practice that I had, I became almost a centaur. I used sometimes

to ride at a gallop, standing up on the horse's back.

You must learn to handle an axe well; an ordinary American can do about as much with his axe as many an Englishman can do with a whole tool-chest.

Show yourself willing to be taught, and you will find the settlers always ready to help you on.

On starting a place of your own, don't make the mistake we made, but build your cattle-sheds, etc., on the hillside facing the south, and be careful about selecting the site for your house; you will find plenty to keep you employed, without having to undo work already done.

Take due precautions against prairie fires; you cannot tell at what minute one may come along; and don't place too much reliance upon any natural advantages you may seem to have. To burn the grass of a strip of land between two furrows thirty yards apart does not take long, and this simple precaution may save you hundreds of dollars.

You must be content to see very few people at times, and those, perhaps, not altogether of

the kind you would have associated with in England, though you will find that the majority improve very much when they become their own masters and get a home they can call their own.

You must leave all idea of luxuries behind you; comforts are as much as you can expect, and indeed you may at some time have to consider yourself fortunate if you get the barest necessities of life, as, for instance, during the grasshoppers' visit, of which I have spoken.

Still, all things considered, if you are not happy in the old country, and are dissatisfied with your position and see no chance of bettering it, you might do worse than go west. This fact remains, that if you are willing to work, you need never despair of getting a livelihood, which does not always follow in this country.

I know that if at any time I found that I could not get along here, I should at once return to the States, feeling convinced that, having got my own living since I was thirteen, I could surely do the same again.

The principal thing, however, for the emi-

grant to bear in mind is, that he must follow old Horace Greeley's advice, and "Go west, young man, go west!" It is no use stopping about New York, or any other big cities, on the look-out for work, as things are pretty much the same there as in London.

With regard to climate, I think that the American's remark as to his having seen no weather in England, only a lot of samples, applies equally well to this part of the world, though perhaps the samples did not follow each other quite as quickly. The ranges of the thermometer are certainly much greater.

During the winter, the cold weather—and it was cold, too—usually lasted several weeks without a thaw, and during the summer we sometimes went for a very long time without seeing a sign of a cloud, and the sun was hot enough to raise blisters on one's arm even through a shirt. When it rains, it usually pours, and as the little ravines and creeks mostly drained a large surface of land, they were often swollen beyond bounds.

Our nearest ravine once overflowed and carried a rare lot of stuff away, and after the water had subsided, we had to spend a day

down the creek collecting our property, as we found it deposited on the brush heaps; there were planks, wheelbarrows, pitchforks, pails, barrels, etc.,—all in the wildest confusion, together with the majority of our fire-wood. At the same time, the water entered our milk-house and spoiled the milk and cream that was there, but the crocks and pans, though floating around, could not get out, as there was a door to the place.

Sometimes we had a heavy rain at the beginning or ending of winter, which froze as it fell until everything was encased in ice. This was dreadfully hard on the cattle, especially when they were weak and poor, after a long, cold winter.

We were also subject at times to terrific hailstorms, during which the stones were often of a tremendous size. I have heard old Blake say that once he was driving to the fort with a lot of garden truck for salad, etc., when a storm came on and the hailstones were as big as hens' eggs, and they rattled down upon him so hard that he had to empty his produce out of the big wooden tub it was packed in, and get underneath it himself. He may have

exaggerated the size a little, but anyhow, when I was at Anderson's, we had a storm, when, without the slightest exaggeration, the stones were larger than walnuts, and damage was done to glass windows, etc., in Manhattan to the extent of several hundred dollars.

Now and then we were visited by very high winds, almost hurricanes, which did considerable damage. I have seen haycocks lifted from the ground and carried high in the air, while chips of wood, boards, and other bodies would often be carried some distance.

The roofs of all stables and outhouses are always kept down with ropes with a big stone on either end.

While I was at Blake's, a prairie settler's house was blown over and demolished, and the boards carried several hundred yards. It was reported in the local papers that during one storm a sow was carried right across the Smoky River. This I can only give as I read it, I did not see the occurrence myself.

After I left I heard that a railway bridge across the Blue River was wrecked.

If my few remarks are acted upon on your

arrival in "Sunny Kansas" or the neighbouring States, I am convinced that you will not regret it, and I shall be glad to think that these reminiscences have not been written in vain.